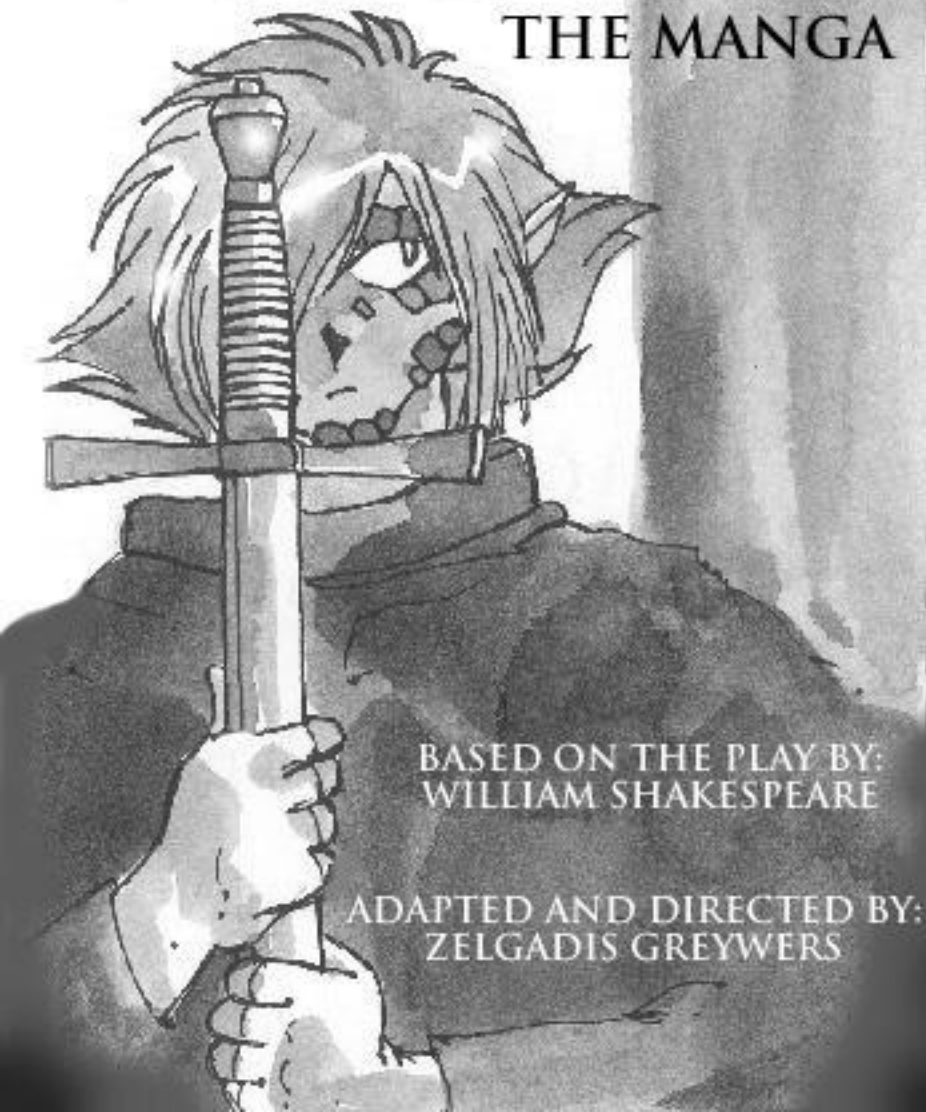


HAMLET:

THE MANGA



BASED ON THE PLAY BY:
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY:
ZELGADIS GREYWERS

Ladies and Gentlemen...
Introducing the Head of Seyruun's
Ministry of Culture, Gracia--er-- I mean,
Naga the White Serpent...

Oh-HO-HO-HO-
HO-HO !!!
Greetings, Culture
Lovers...

I'm coming to you tonight
from the Atlas City Palace of the
Arts where the curtain is about to
rise on the most anticipated event
of this year's theatre
season...

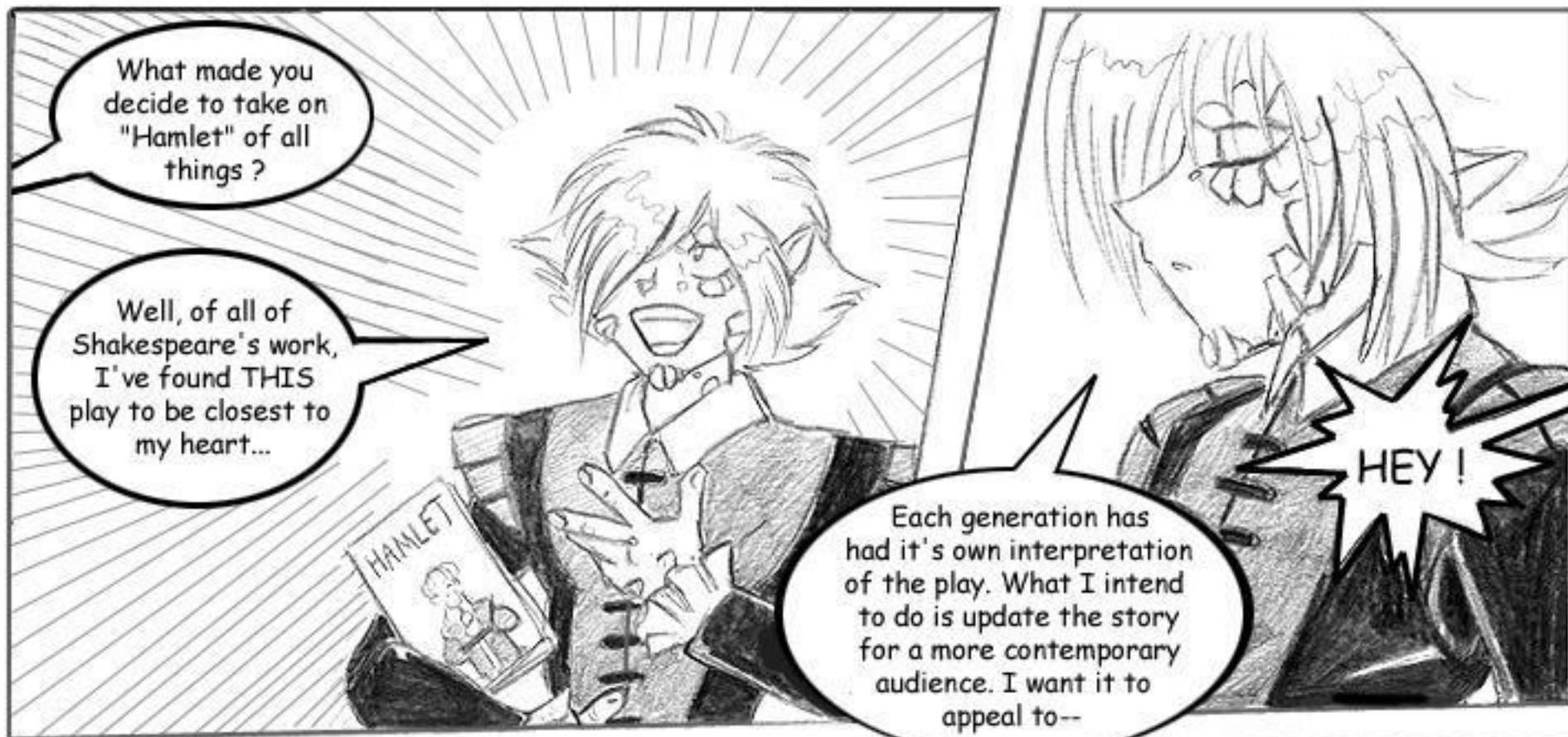
...A brand spanking-new interpretation of William
Shakespeare's classic tragedy --**Hamlet** !
We've a large and spirited crowd on hand to
witness tonight's gala premiere...

Sorry lady !
No pets either !
You're going to
have to do
SOMETHING
about these
dogs of
yours...

Nice doggie...

What do you mean,
there's no smoking in
this theatre ?





What made you decide to take on "Hamlet" of all things?

Well, of all of Shakespeare's work, I've found THIS play to be closest to my heart...

Each generation has had it's own interpretation of the play. What I intend to do is update the story for a more contemporary audience. I want it to appeal to--

HEY!



What is it, Lina? Can't you see I'm in the middle of an interview here?

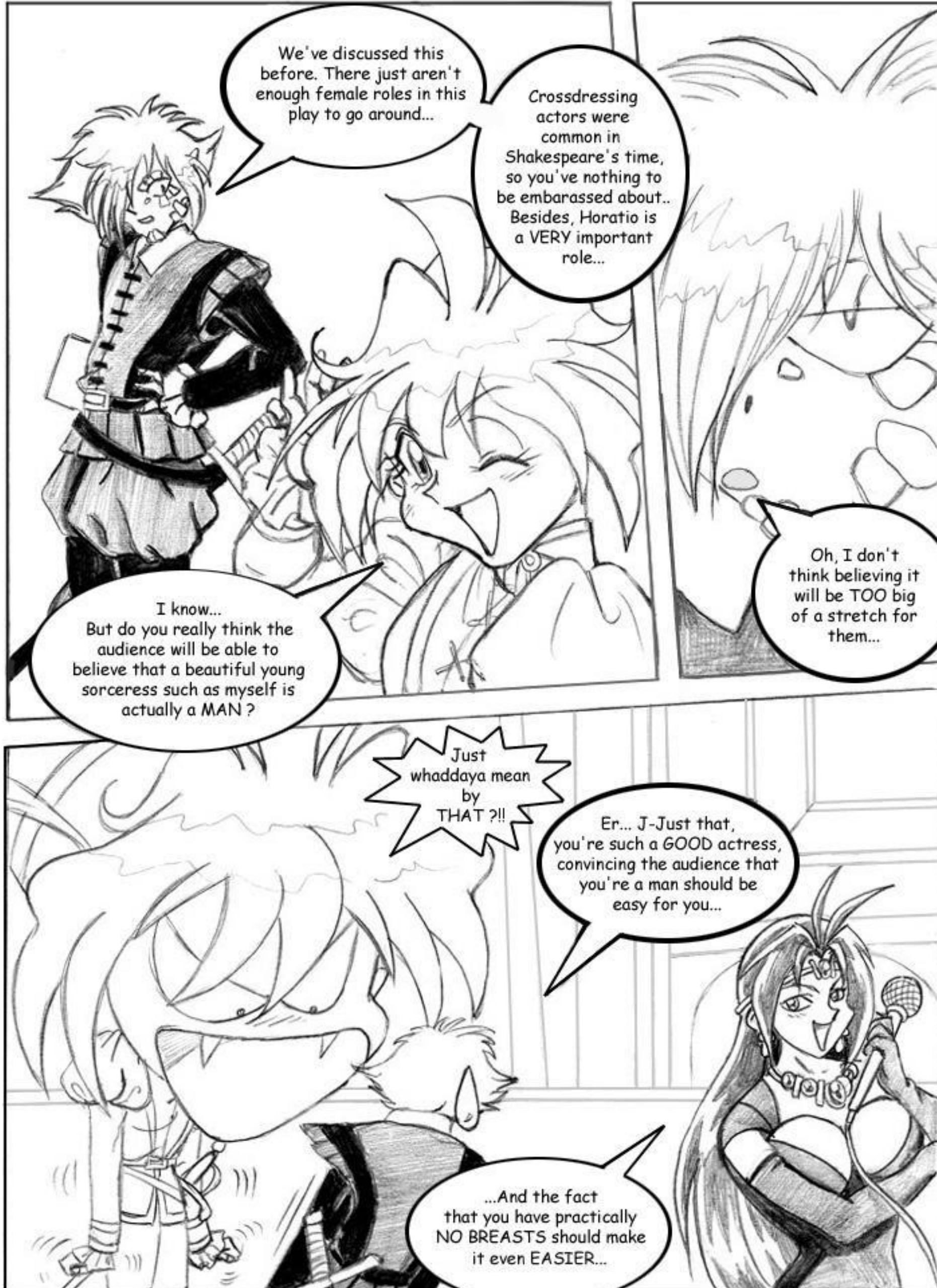
Director Man!
I want a word with you!

So tell me, Mr. Greywers, what is this "Hamlet" play all about, anyway?

Well, the play itself is about a young man who struggles to keep himself from being overwhelmed by the chaos and madness which surrounds him on a daily basis...

He's a character in a situation which I find myself EASILY able to relate to...

Grrr!
I'm not going through with this! I don't like the way this costume looks on me! Why do I have to be a GUY anyway?



We've discussed this before. There just aren't enough female roles in this play to go around...

Crossdressing actors were common in Shakespeare's time, so you've nothing to be embarrassed about.. Besides, Horatio is a VERY important role...

I know... But do you really think the audience will be able to believe that a beautiful young sorceress such as myself is actually a MAN?

Oh, I don't think believing it will be TOO big of a stretch for them...

Just whaddaya mean by THAT ?!!

Er... J-Just that, you're such a GOOD actress, convincing the audience that you're a man should be easy for you...

...And the fact that you have practically NO BREASTS should make it even EASIER...

W
H
O
M
P!!



Look, Serious...
It appears as if
the show is finally
beginning...

How strange...
I have to admit, I'm
not that familiar with
the Shakespearean
canon....



But to my
recollection, I am
quite certain that the play,
"Hamlet", contained a
DISTINCT LACK of
large-breasted flying
women...

Perhaps this
production is one of those
bizarre, artsy, post-modern
interpretations I've heard tell
about. This "flying harlot" might
represent some abstract idea,
like, man's struggle against
adversity...

CRASHHH !!!

Perhaps, Elrobos...
Then again, maybe
she's just part of some
cheap gimmick the
director cooked up in
order to titillate the
audience...

Sigh
Such things are all
too common in what
passes for entertain-
ment in this world...
You come into a theatre
expecting high drama,
but all you get instead
is cheesy
commercialism.

Dammit, I
didn't come here to
see high drama OR
cheesy commercialism !
I came here to see
mayhem, suffering, and
senseless violence...
A soul in torment crying
out against an unfair
oppressor...

WHERE IS IT ?

IT ?



For the opening night
cast party I planned
on throwing after tonight's
performance...

I was going to set
up a whole buffet
backstage... I ordered
fried chicken...
...a shrimp platter...

...spaghetti and
meatballs....

...steak and eggs...
...pasta...

...a full dessert
tray...

...oh, and YOUR
favorite, of course--
cocktail weenies
with wasabi
sauce...

Sigh.
But since the
play is going to be
cancelled, there's
really no point in
going ahead with
this, now is
there, Lina?

Allright everybody!
Listen up!

Lina?

It's time to
get this show on
the road!

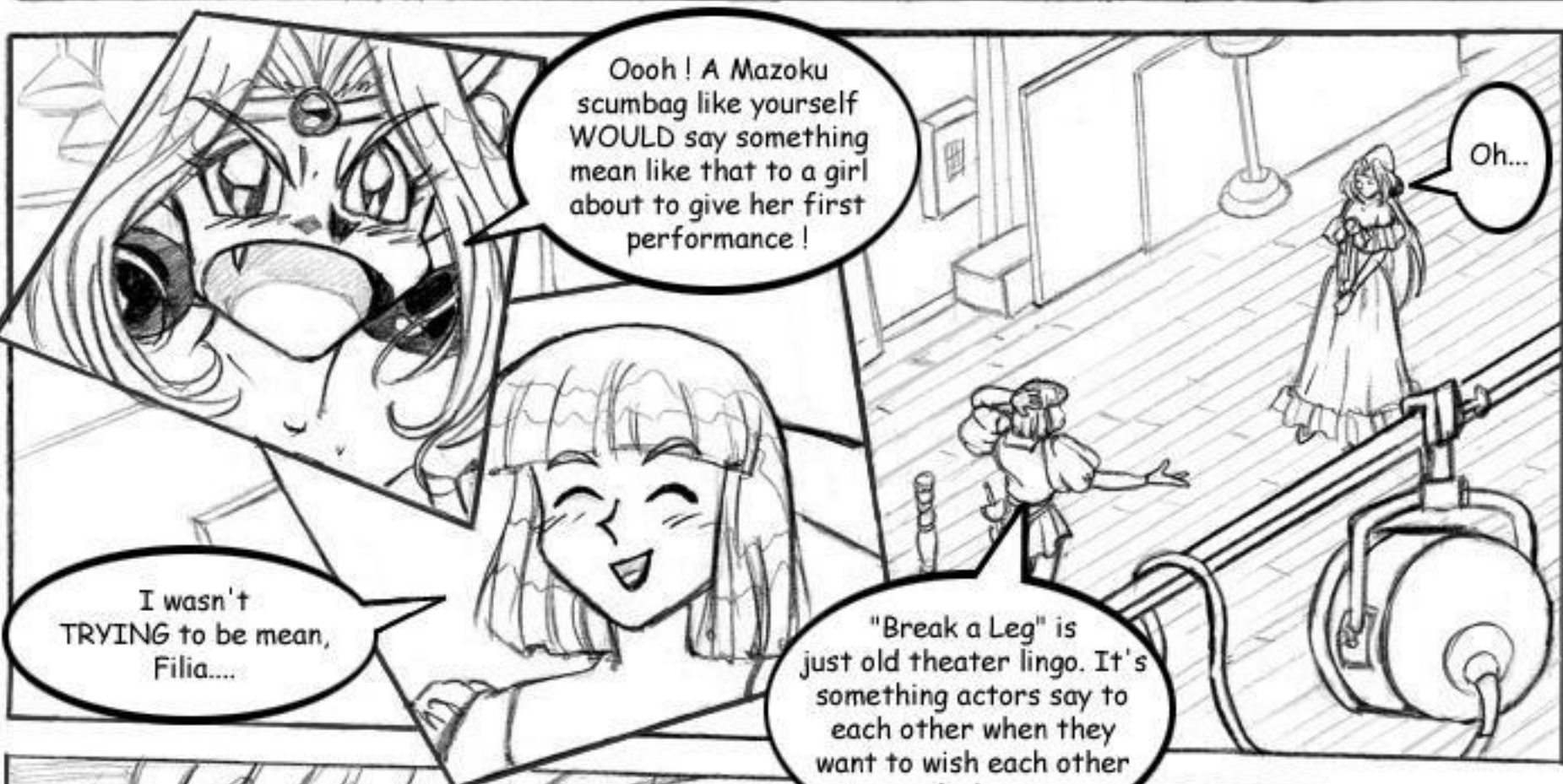
To your places!

Lights!
Make up!
Wardrobe!

Curtain rises
in ten
seconds!

PROPS







DIE!



Xelloss!
You heartless
NAMAGOMI!

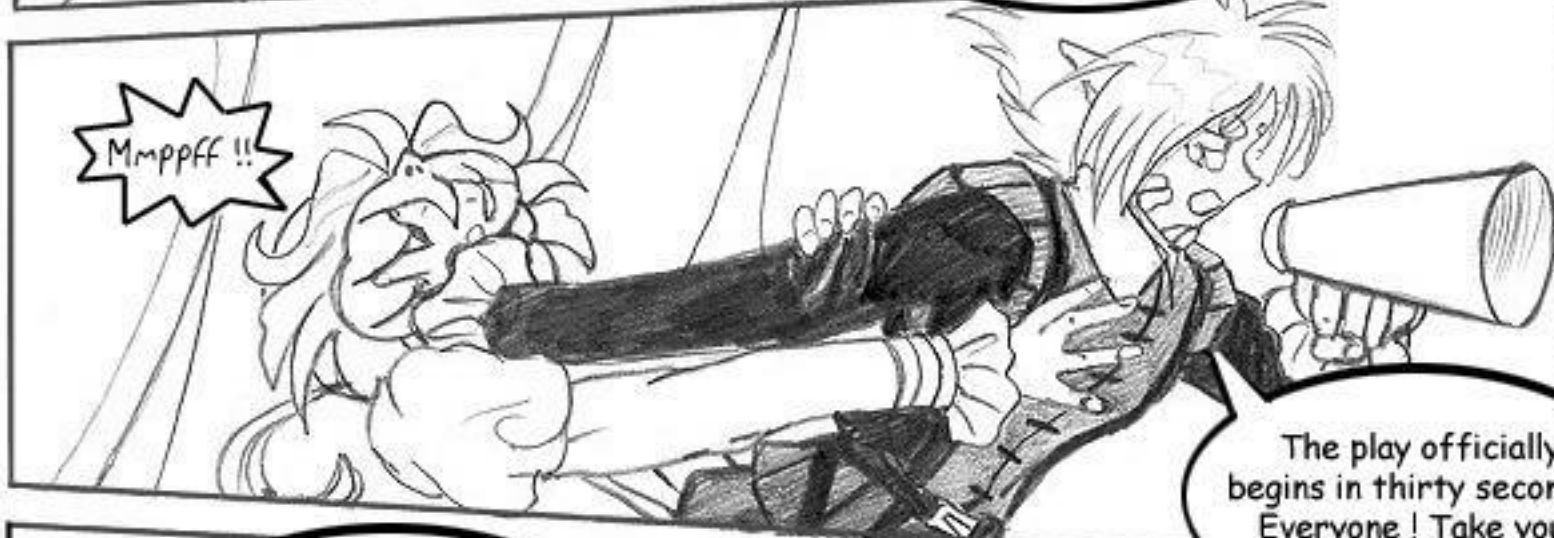




Y'know... *coff*....
Around certain people,
there are times when being
a masochist REALLY comes
in handy...



Allright!
Listen up,
people!

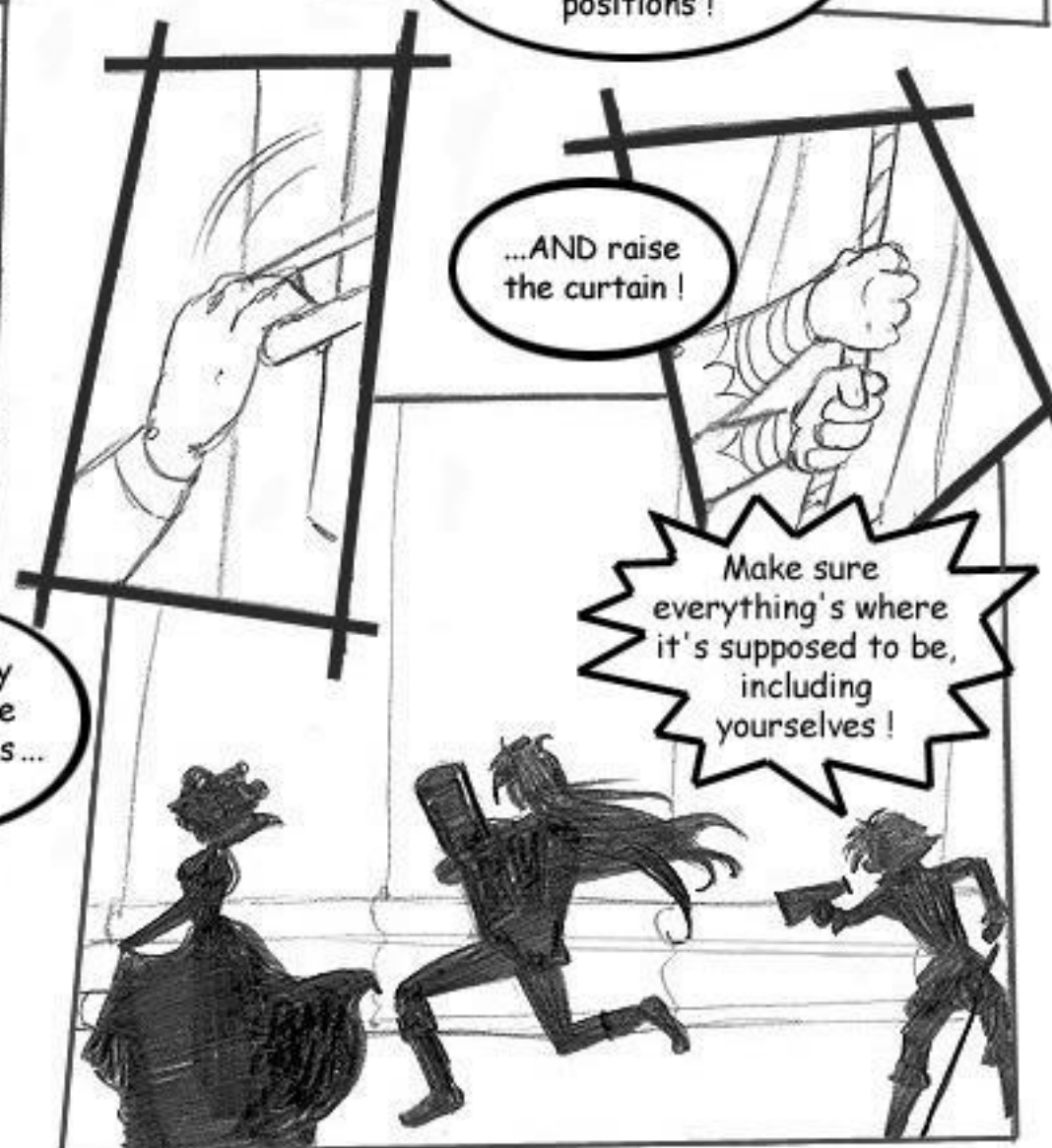


The play officially
begins in thirty seconds!
Everyone! Take your
positions!



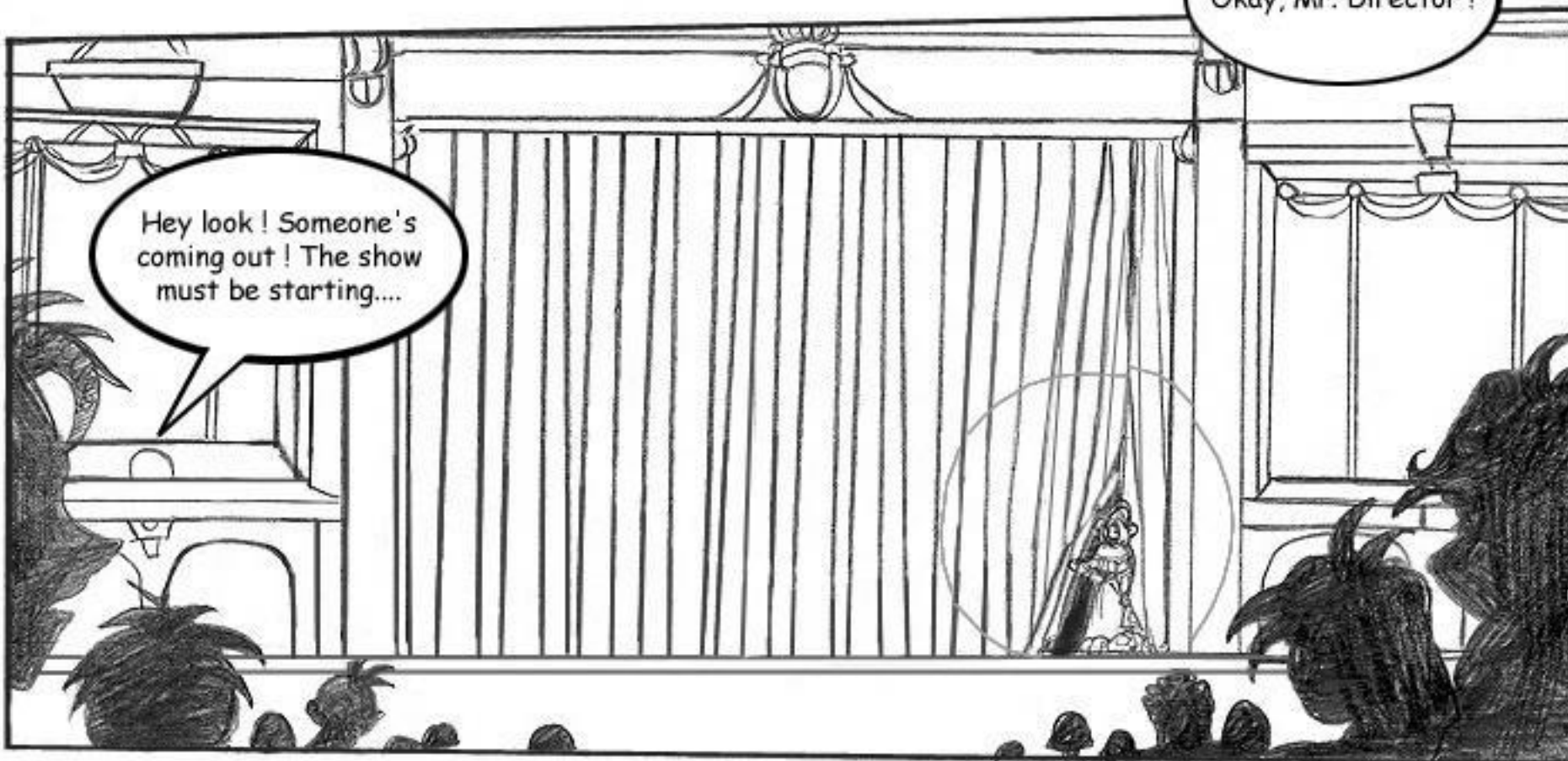
Hurry and get in
your costumes if you
haven't already!


Get ready
to dim the
houselights...




...AND raise
the curtain!

Make sure
everything's where
it's supposed to be,
including
yourselves!

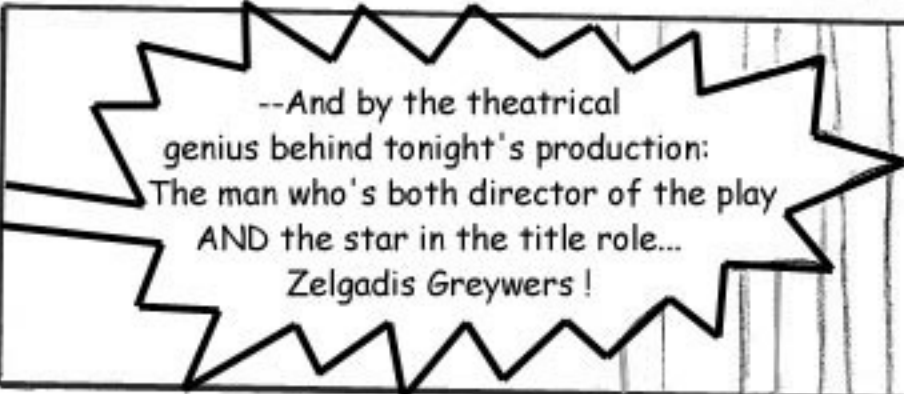





...I bid you welcome to tonight's performance of William Shakespeare's time-honored tragedy---




"HAMLET"!
Brought to you thanks to a generous grant from the Seyruun Royal Ministry of Culture...




--And by the theatrical genius behind tonight's production: The man who's both director of the play AND the star in the title role...
Zelgadis Greywers!



FINALLY!
This play is getting off the ground...



It would be nice if everything went without a hitch tonight... So far, everyone and everything SEEM to be where they're supposed to be...



Wait a minute...
It's been a while since I've seen Xellos... I wonder if HE's where he's supposed to be... It'd be just like him to try and create a major headache for me...



Hi, Director Man! Is it time for the play to start already?

Sigh
Why me?

Coming up next...
Act One

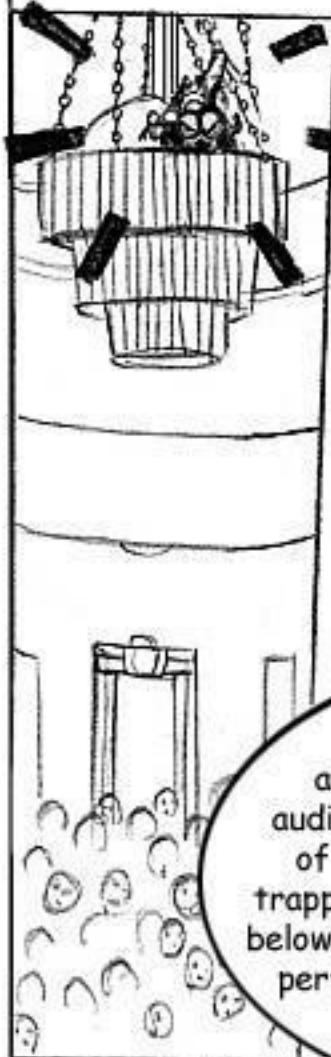
Hamlet: The Manga

Act One

Scene One



Hello, theatre lovers !
It's me again ! Naga,
the White Serpent !



Coming to you from
a chandelier high above the
audience at the Atlas City Palace
of the Arts where I'm STILL
trapped... *Sigh*... On the stage far
below me, you can see that tonight's
performance is just about ready
to begin...

Filia, the narrator, has
just stepped out on stage
and is starting to deliver
the opening monologue...



CLINK!
RATTLE!

Rest assured that
I, Naga, will be on hand
to provide you with a stageside,
play-by-play commentary of
tonight's performance...
Just as soon as I'm free of
these chains... Urreeghh...
..Ennhhhh...



Tonight's story
takes place centuries ago...
In a faraway kingdom
named Denmark...

...in a period of history when darkness and chaos ruled the land..

Grrr... Xelloss!
You said if I let you in on this play, you wouldn't cause me any trouble!

I wasn't trying to cause you any trouble...
Just trying to wish Miss Filia a little luck with her performance tonight...

Just leave her alone! I don't want there to be any fighting between you two tonight!

Uh-oh!
I forgot! Filia's opening speech! This is the part where the curtain goes up!

...It was a time of unrest and upheaval, when thrones were often passed from one hand to another through violent and bloody conflict...

We gotta get off the stage...
We'll continue this discussion LATER, Xelloss!

Urk!!

RUSTLE

Our story begins in Castle Elsinore, the ancestral home of the Danish royal family, whose stark stone walls have borne silent witness to many momentous and tragic events...
But nothing like what is about to unfold tonight in our story...



Scene One opens on a guard's platform on an outer wall of Castle Elsinore during the dead of night... The fog and shadows now lie thick upon the stones... So thick that those whose duty it is to guard them can barely see each other...



..For tonight, a strange and unearthly power is about to descend upon this castle and it's unsuspecting inhabitants...



Who's there ?

Nay ! Answer me !
Stand and unfold yourself !

Long live the King !



Barnardo the soldier.
Played by Gourry Gabriev.



Francisco the Soldier.
Played by Sylphiel Nels Rada

Barnardo !

You come most carefully upon your hour...

'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.



For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold, And I am sick at heart.

Sheesh, Sylphiel.. It IS g-g-getting cold around here...



A-CHOO !



FREEZE ARROW !

BACKSTAGE...

Hey, Vrumugen...
Ease up on the ice
spells. okay?

What
we WANT
to do is create
the impression
that the play is
set in a cold
place...

What we DON'T
want to do is give the
actors frostbite...

....FREEZE ARROW!

H-Have you
had quiet g-guard?

N-Not
a m-m-mouse
s-s-stirring...

That's it! That's
the cue for Horatio
to start heading out
onto the stage...

Lina! What
are you still doing
here? Get moving
or you'll miss your
entrance!

Alright, Sir
Lawrence Olivier!
I'm on my way al-
ready! Sheesh!

Buffet or no,
if Stone Boy talks to
me like that ONE more
time, I'm gonna turn him
into a speed
bump...

Let's see...
the next actor to
make his entrance
is the ghost..

Speaking of which...
Where IS the ghost?
Rezo! REZO! Where
ARE YOU?!

CRASSH!!

What was that?

Here's a word of advice, Zeldadis, for the next time you design a costume for me... Long flowing robes and heavy armor do NOT mix...

Rezo! What ARE you doing? This is no time to be clowning around!

I'm not clowning around. I'm attempting to master the art of WALKING in this ridiculous getup!

It isn't easy with this tin can on my head...

It's weight is continually throwing me off balance, and it's interfering with my innate ability to sense where I'm going!

Look! I'm sorry about that! Can you please hurry and get to the stage now?

Sigh Fine....

But worst of all, it is completely **RUINING MY HAIRSTYLE!!**

...But if my split ends get as bad as yours, you'll regret making me wear this thing!

CLAP!

At that moment,
onstage....

Stand ho !
Who is there ?

A friend to this ground.
And liegeman to the Dane.

Say, what, is
Horatio there ?

A piece of
him...

At this point in
the story, our two vigilant
watchmen are surprised
by the sudden arrival of
a handsome visitor...

It is Horatio,
a dashing young nobleman
who's long been a loyal friend to
the Danish Royal Family (and whose
role is being played tonight
by the equally dashing
Lina Inverse !)

Sigh
WHY do I
have to be a
GUY ?


I wanted to
be a PRINCESS,
dammit....

What, has this
thing appeared again
tonight ?


Welcome,
Horatio...

I have seen
nothing....


Horatio says
'tis but our
fantasy, and will
not let belief take
hold of him...




Touching this
dreaded sight twice
seen of us....



Therefore I have
entreated him along with
us to watch the minutes of
this night, that, if again this
apparition come, he may
approve our eyes and
speak to it....

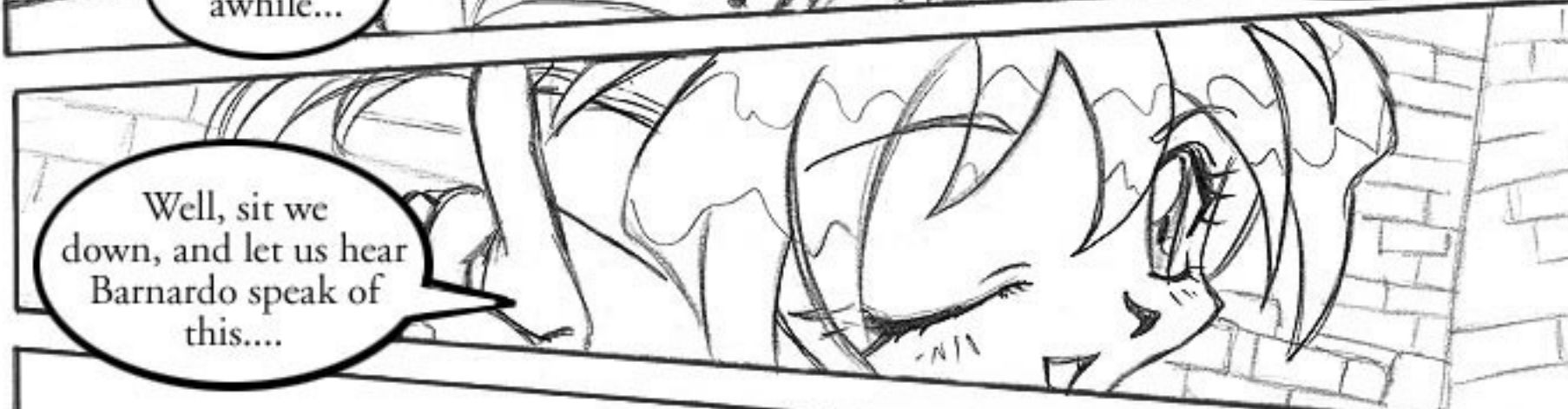


Tush,
tush, twill
not appear..




Sit down
awhile...


And let us once
again assail your ears, that
are so fortified against
our story, what we have
two nights seen.




Well, sit we
down, and let us hear
Barnardo speak of
this....



Well,
Barnardo? We've
been sitting here
for three minutes
now....



Isn't there
SOMETHING
you wanted to
tell me?



...About a
certain GHOST you've
seen prowling around
this area lately?

Hmmm...
A ghost?

Don't you remember,
Gourry dear? You're
supposed to talk about
the ghost now...

You say:

Last night of all,
when yond same star
that's westward from
the pole....

Uhhh....

Last night, a ball,
when Lon's same star
was...uh...resting
on a pole....

I knew it wouldn't
be long before Jellyfish
Brains started forgetting
his lines....

CLINK!
CLINK!
CLINK!

!

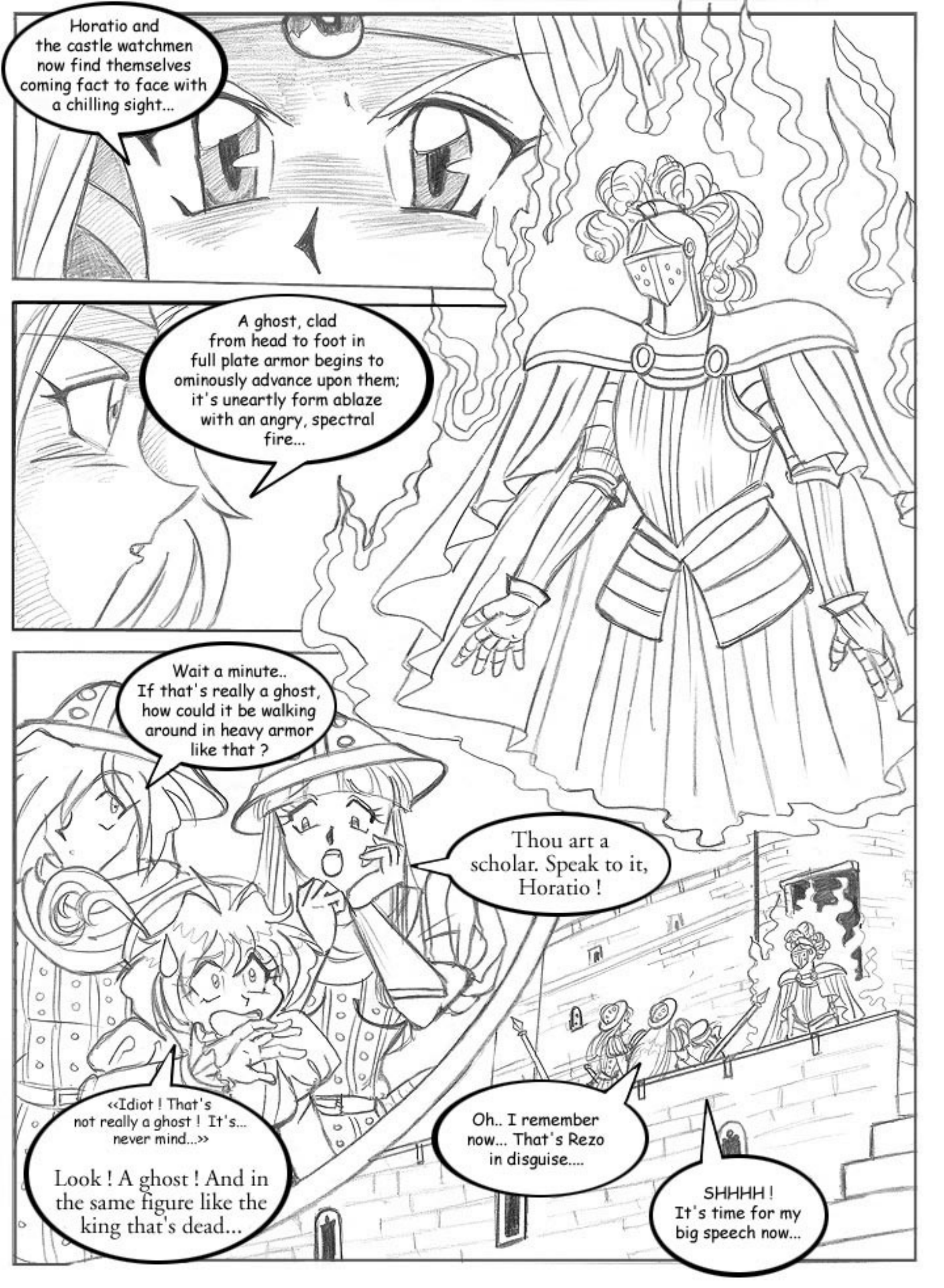
CLINK!
CLINK!
CLINK!

Look!
Here it comes
again!

CLINK!
CLINK!
CLINK!

GASP!

A
GHOST!



Horatio and the castle watchmen now find themselves coming fact to face with a chilling sight...

A ghost, clad from head to foot in full plate armor begins to ominously advance upon them; it's unearthly form ablaze with an angry, spectral fire...

Wait a minute.. If that's really a ghost, how could it be walking around in heavy armor like that?

Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio!

«Idiot! That's not really a ghost! It's... never mind...»


Look! A ghost! And in the same figure like the king that's dead...

Oh.. I remember now... That's Rezo in disguise....


SHHHH!
It's time for my big speech now...

What art thou that
usurp'st this time of
night, together with that
fair and warlike form
in which the majesty of
buried Denmark did
sometimes march?
By heaven, I charge
thee, speak!






But soft, behold !
Lo, where it comes again !




I'll cross it
though it blast
me...

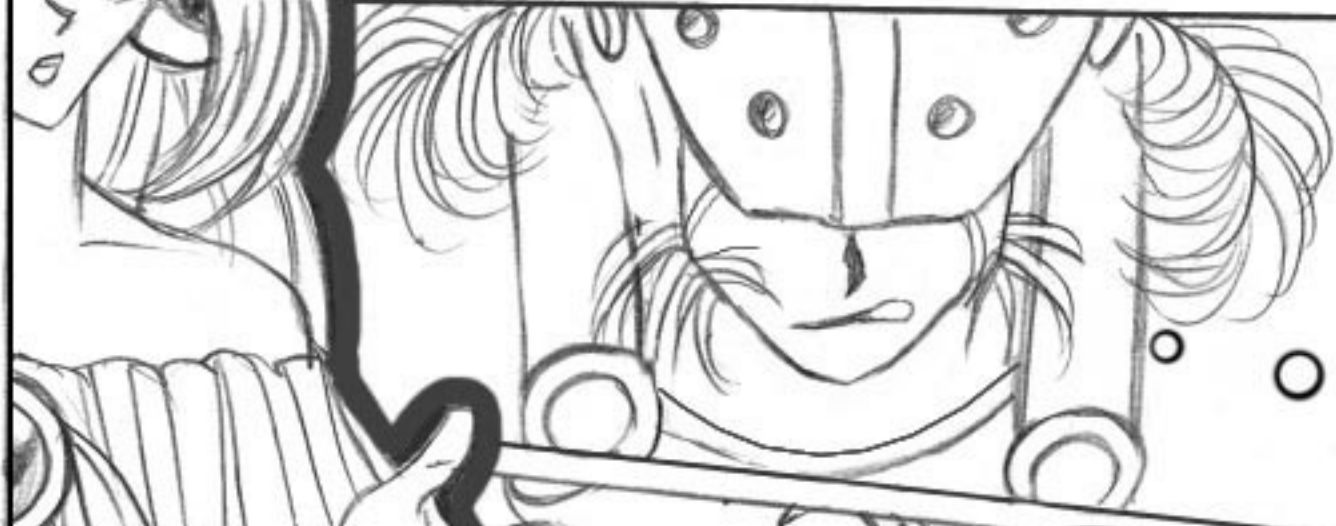
Stay, illusion !




Horatio
now rushes down
to confront the
ghost, to learn,
if he can, the
true reason
behind it's
unsettling
appearance.




If thou hast
any sound or use
of voice, speak
to me !



Sigh
I'll never
understand how
Amelia can fall down
and land on HER
head all the time
without feeling
any ill
effects...



If there be
any good
thing to be
done that may
to thee do ease
and grace to
me, speak to
me !



Groan

THUNK!



Uh-oh....

Unnnhhh...



Hey....
Hey....
Hey....

C'mon, Rezo...
Speak to me...

Here.
I'll cast a
Recovery
spell
on him...



Damn.
Everyone's watching us..
Gotta do SOMETHING...

Ahhh... So... As
you can see, our noble
heroes' attempts to make
contact with the ghost
have failed....

Damn.

Everyone's watching us..
Gotta do SOMETHING...



Look! The morn
in russet mantle clad
walks o'er the dew of
yon high eastward hill.
Break we our watch up,
and by my advice...

Allright,
Barnardo. You grab
his legs, Francisco and
I will take his arms...
It's time to exit--
stage right....

Let us impart
what we have seen
tonight unto young
Hamlet; for, upon
my life, this spirit,
dumb to us, will
speak to him.





Uh, Miss Lina... I think what we're heading for is actually stage LEFT...

Whatever Just keep moving.

And so, our scene now ends, with Horatio running off to tell his best friend, Prince Hamlet, about all he has just seen...



What will young Hamlet's reaction be upon hearing the news that his father's ghost has been seen roaming the castle? Stay tuned...

Unh.... Almost free...

RATTLE !



Well folks, it looks as if our play is off to an exciting start! It also looks as if Rezo will be needing an aspirin and a good stiff shot of whisky once he gets backstage...

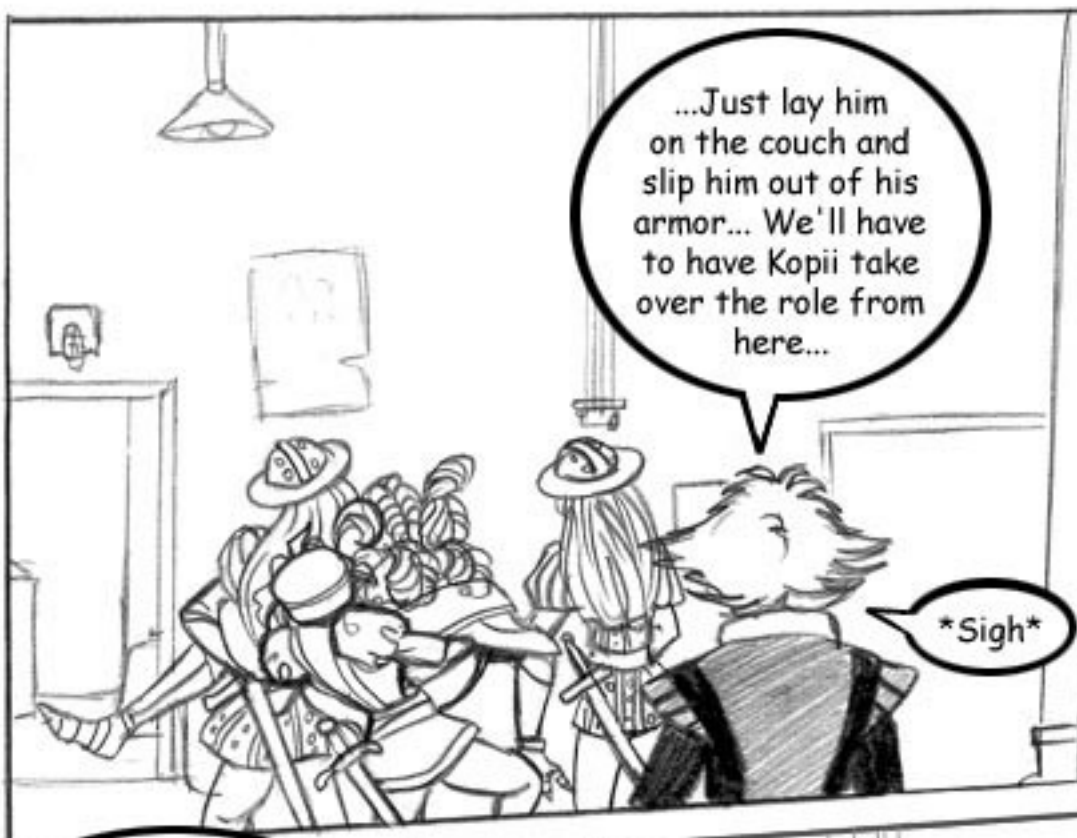
Sure wish I could join him back there...

Uh, Zel... Where you want us to put him?

Sigh Why did I KNOW something like this was going to happen? Why can't things ever go smoothly for me?

Hey! Zel! Wake up! Armor Man here weighs a ton! Where do we put him?

In the Green Room...



...Just lay him on the couch and slip him out of his armor... We'll have to have Kopii take over the role from here...

Sigh



Alright, Vrumugen. Let's get the set turned around for Scene Two...



The curtain rises again in less than one minute...



Oh, Zangie darling... Isn't this exciting?



Our big debut as Shakespearean actors! Oh... This is SO romantic!

Martina... As always, you make a lovely Queen...



And you've never looked so regal. Oh! My heart...

It's beating so fast! Is this stage fright, or could it be LOVE?

Martina...



Hey, you two! Quit fooling around with each other and get to the stage!



Scene Two is about to start. This is NO TIME for romance!



Uh... Mr. Zelgadis?



How does
this costume
look on me?..
Is my make-up
okay?

Y..You
look FINE,
Amelia... Yes.. I
believe this
will do...

What is it,
Ameli--

aaaahhh....

BLUSH

Oh,
good. I'm
SO relieved.
I was worried
you might
not like
it.

My my,
Amelia... You're
looking every inch the
tragic heroine.

Thanks. I've
never really played
a role like this before...
I hope I do a good
job...

No matter
what happens, I,
Amelia Wil Tesla
Seyruun, vow, I will NOT
let you down, Mr.
Zeldadis!

I will
play this role with
a full heart --with the
same dedication and
courage that I apply to
being a true
champion of
JUSTICE !!!

This is a role I'm sure I was born to play...A young heroine, pure of spirit, struggling against a cruel and unjust world...



THERE you are, Amelia!

Daddy! I was just showing my costume to Mr. Zeligadis.. He says it's okay.



Splendid! Tonight, as you know, we will be stepping out on stage as father and daughter, both as actors and as the roles we both play...

This is a drama about a young man's quest for JUSTICE! You and I must work together to inspire the audience, to make this a performance to remember!



Yes! So the message of this play will remain burning within their souls long after the final curtain has fallen! I know if we try with all of our might, we cannot fail!

The name of "Shakespeare" may fade from human memory, but our passionate acting will be remembered for ages to come!



Oh...
sniff
Daddy...



Amelia...

AMELIAAAAAA...

DADDYYYYYY...



Neither am I...Justice Speech...
...Overload...

Unh... I'm not feeling too good all of a sudden...

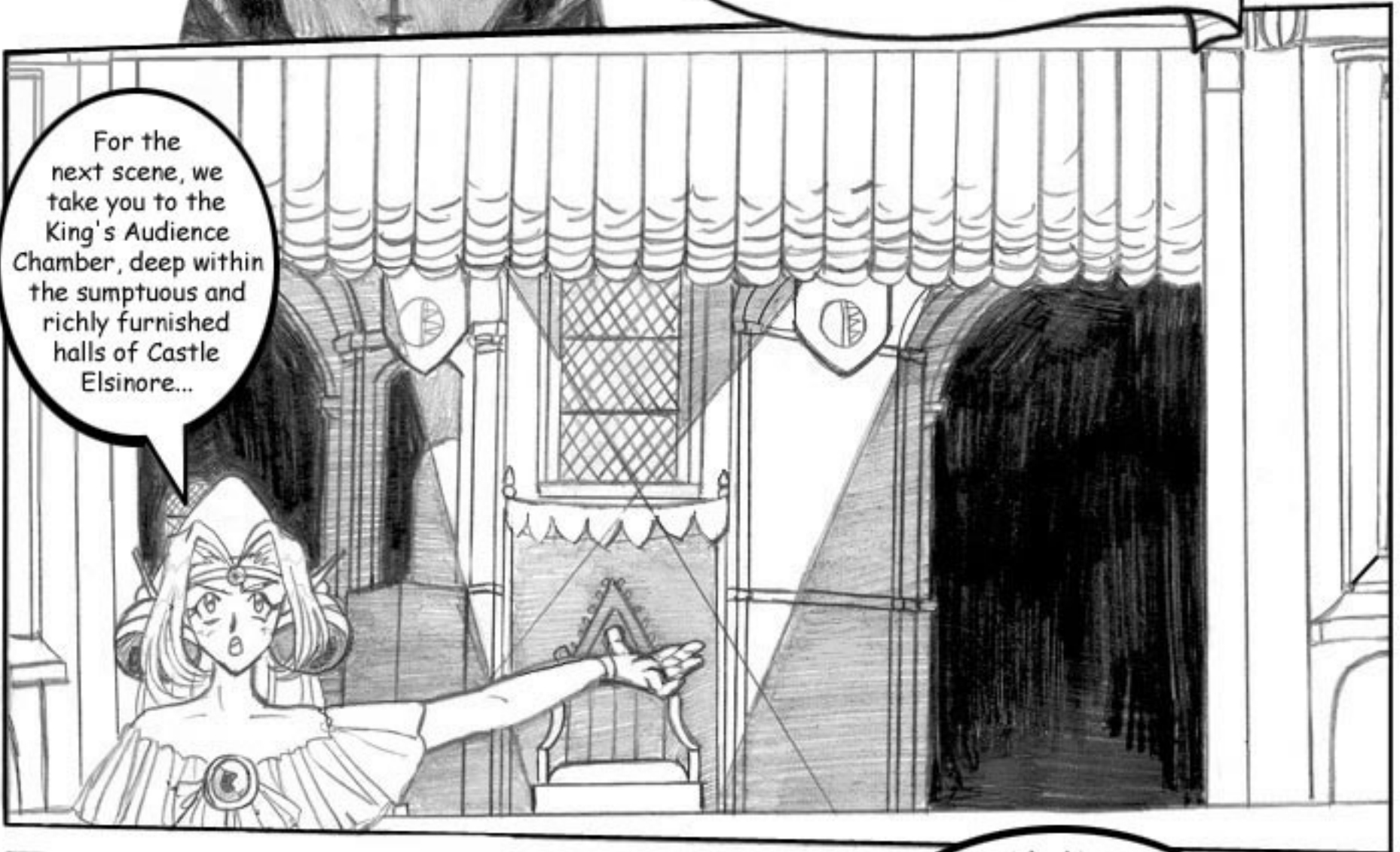
Allright...
Let's get
ready for
the next
scene....

Hamlet:

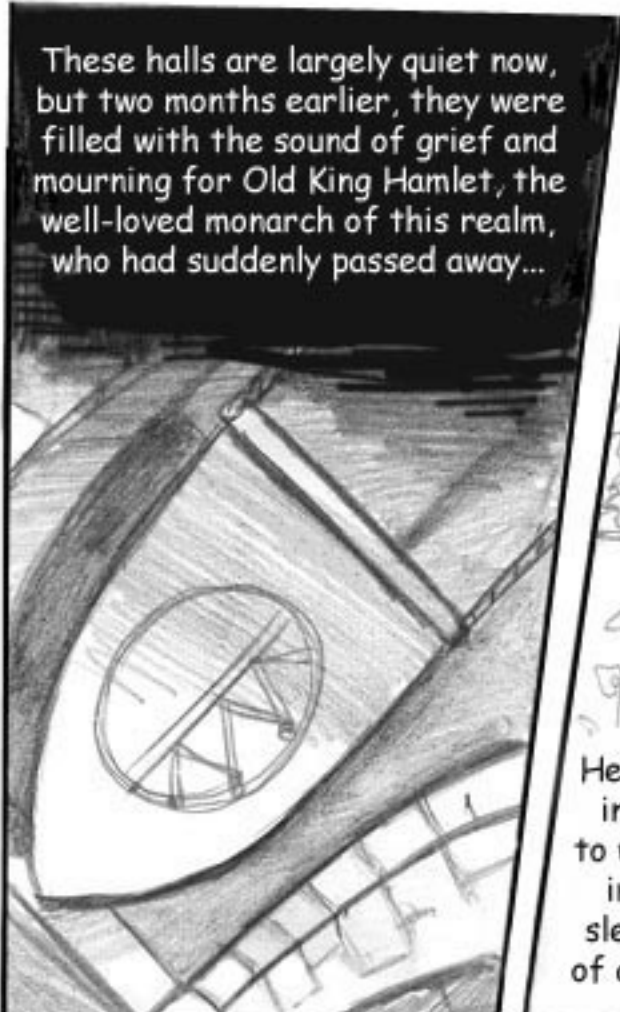
Act One

Scene Two

For the
next scene, we
take you to the
King's Audience
Chamber, deep within
the sumptuous and
richly furnished
halls of Castle
Elsinore...

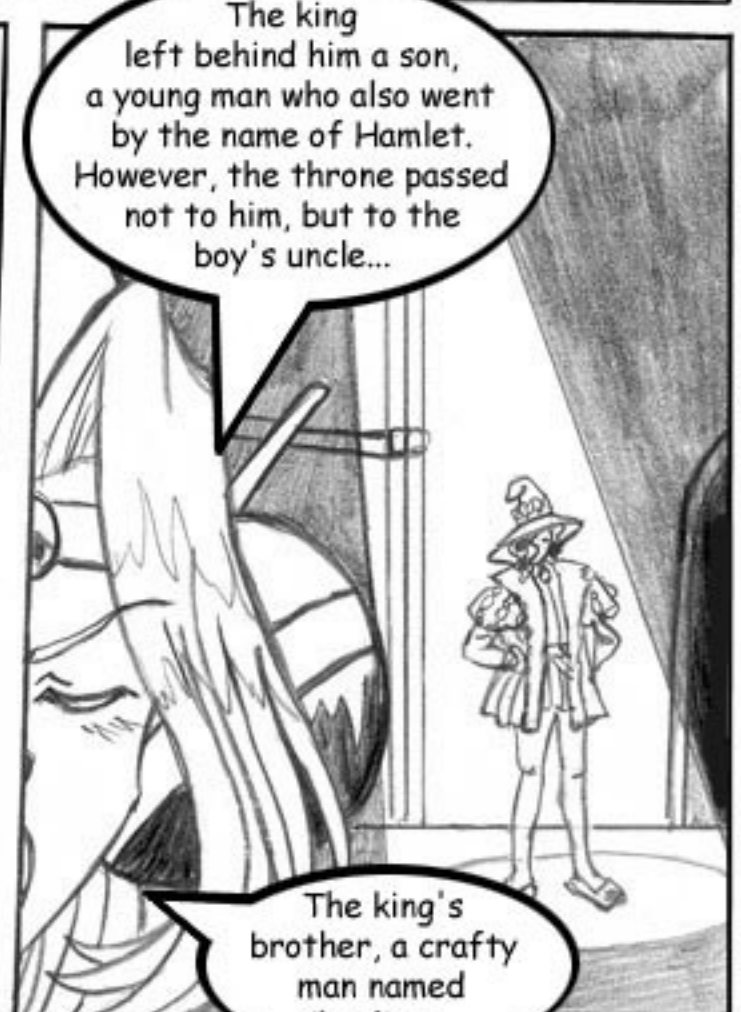


These halls are largely quiet now,
but two months earlier, they were
filled with the sound of grief and
mourning for Old King Hamlet, the
well-loved monarch of this realm,
who had suddenly passed away...



He was found lying all alone out
in his garden, where he liked
to while away the summer hours
in sleep. Only now he wasn't
sleeping. He was dead, a victim
of an apparent snakebite wound.

The king
left behind him a son,
a young man who also went
by the name of Hamlet.
However, the throne passed
not to him, but to the
boy's uncle...



The king's
brother, a crafty
man named
Claudius...



Claudius had assumed power, with the intention of transferring his kingship to the young Prince Hamlet as soon as the boy had matured enough to handle the duties and responsibilities befitting a monarch.

All now seemed well within the kingdom, but there were those who were suspicious of Claudius and his intentions. However, nothing could be said, as Queen Gertrude, the wife of the late king, had thrown her support behind him.

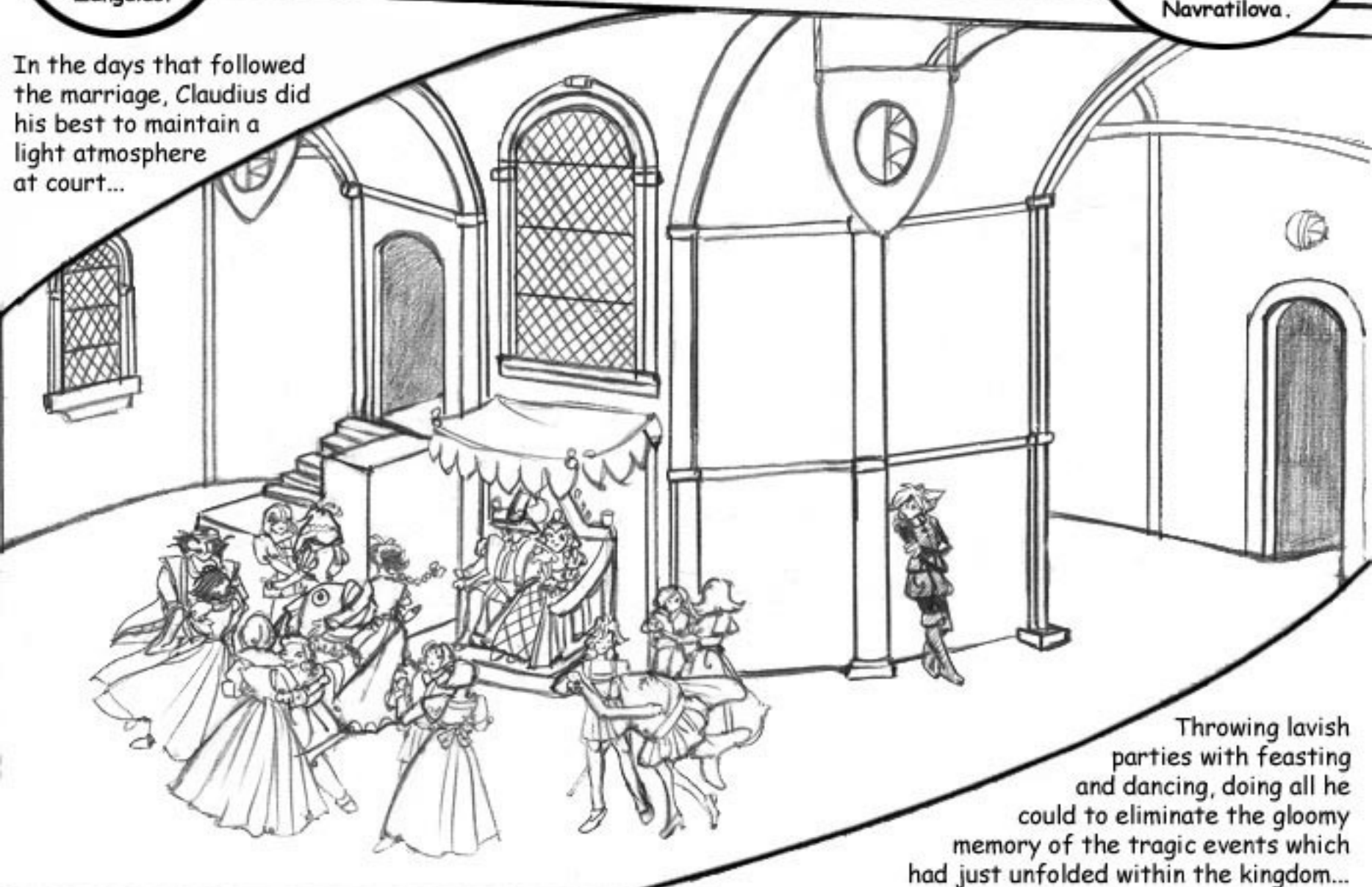


Queen Gertrude played by Her Royal Highness, Princess Martina Xoana Mel Navratilova.

King Claudius, played by world-famous former bounty hunter, Zangulus.

Then one day, in a move that shocked everyone at court, the two of them decided to marry, not more than a month after the late king had been laid to rest...

In the days that followed the marriage, Claudius did his best to maintain a light atmosphere at court...



Throwing lavish parties with feasting and dancing, doing all he could to eliminate the gloomy memory of the tragic events which had just unfolded within the kingdom...

But, on this festive evening, Claudius will find that, for some people in his court, the past is not so readily forgotten...



«Heh. Nice dance partner you got there, Sherra.»

«Shut up.»

The music suddenly stops,
and King Claudius rises to
address the court...

Though yet
of Hamlet, our
dear brother's death,
the memory
be green...

...And that it
us befitted to bear
our hearts in grief
and our whole
kingdom to be
contracted in one
brow of woe...

Yet so far hath
discretion fought with
nature that we with wisest
sorrow think on him
together with remem-
brances of ourselves.

Therefore our
sometime sister, now
our queen,

Th' imperial jointress
to this warlike state...

Have we, as
'twere with a
defeated joy...

...with an auspicious and
a dropping eye, with mirth in
funeral and dirge in marriage,

Giggle

KISS...

In equal scale
weighing delight
and dole ... Taken
to wife.

Ohhh... *KISS*
SMACK

At this point in the story, two figures now step forward to address the king... The king's chief councillor, Polonius, and with him, his son, Laertes...

Uh...
Your Majesty?

« PSST! Hey!
Zangulus! Honeymoon's
over already! »

Laertes, what's
the news with you?
You told us of
some suit...

What is it, Laertes?

What wouldst
thou beg, Laertes,
that shall not be
my offer, not thy
asking?

My dread
lord, your leave
and favor to return
to France...

...From whence
though willingly I came
to Denmark to show my
duty in your coronation,

Yet now I
must confess, that
duty done,

My thoughts
and wishes bend
again toward
France.



Have you
your father's leave?
What says
Polonius?



Hath, my lord, wrung from
me my slow leave by laborsome
petition, and at last upon his will
I sealed my hard consent. I do
beseech you give him leave to go.

Please
PLEASE let me
go...



Take thy fair
hour Laertes. Time
be thine, and thy best
graces spend it at
thy will.



But now, my
cousin Hamlet and
my son--

All eyes in the court now turn towards
a grim figure standing in their midst.
The young Prince Hamlet, who alone
amongst the members of the court is still
wearing black mourning clothes in remem-
brance of the late king. As the present
king calls out his name, the shoulders of
the young man can be seen to stiffen...



How is it
that the clouds
still hang on
you?





Good
Hamlet, cast
thy nighted color
off, and let thine
eye look like a
friend on
Denmark.

Not so my
lord; I am too
much in the
sun...

A little more
than kin, and less
than kind...

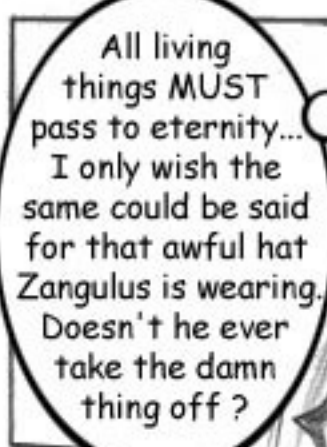





Do not forever
with thy vail'd lids
seek for thy noble
father in the dust.

Ay, madam,
it is common.


Thou know'st
'tis common; all that
lives must die, passing
through nature
to eternity.



All living
things **MUST**
pass to eternity...
I only wish the
same could be said
for that awful hat
Zangulus is wearing.
Doesn't he ever
take the damn
thing off?




'Tis sweet and
commendable in your
nature, Hamlet, to give
these mourning duties
to your father.



For your intent
in going back to school
in Wittenberg, it is most
retrograde to our desire.

But to persever in
obstinate condolment
is a course of impious
stubbornness

You are the
most immediate to our
throne, and with no less
nobility of love than that
which dearest father bears
his son do I impart
toward you.



Let not thy
mother lose her prayers,
Hamlet. I pray thee, stay
with us. Go not to
Wittenberg.



Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply. Be as ourself in Denmark.

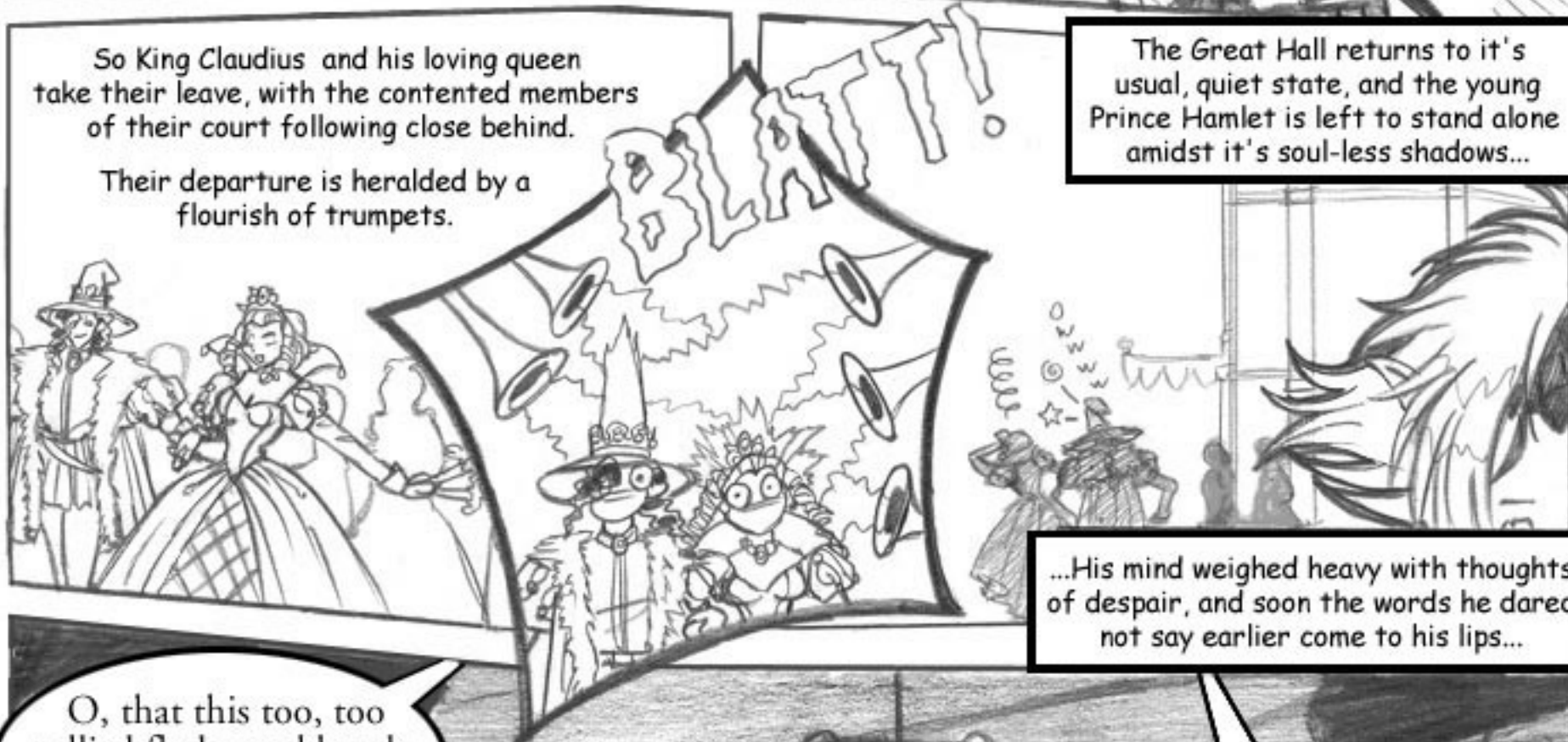
I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

Madam, come...

So King Claudius and his loving queen take their leave, with the contented members of their court following close behind.

Their departure is heralded by a flourish of trumpets.

The Great Hall returns to it's usual, quiet state, and the young Prince Hamlet is left to stand alone amidst it's soul-less shadows...



...His mind weighed heavy with thoughts of despair, and soon the words he dared not say earlier come to his lips...

O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt, that, and resolve itself into a dew...


Or that the Everlasting had not fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter !

Oh God, God, how weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world !

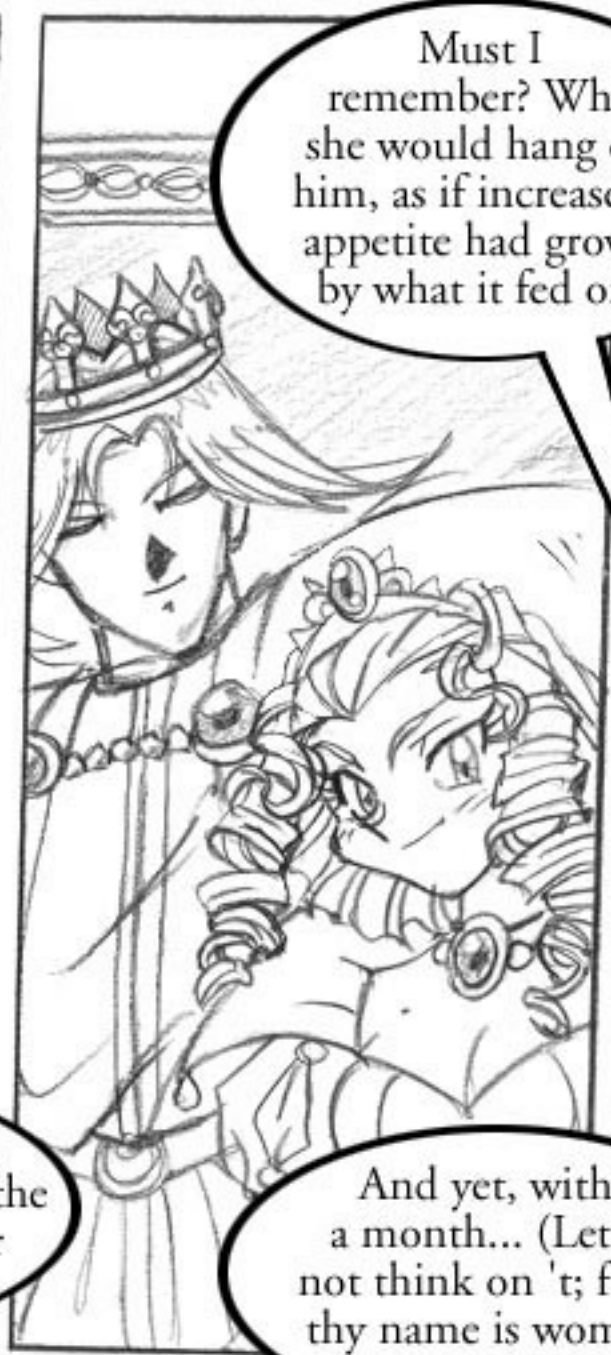
'Tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature possess it merely.

That it should come to this: But two months dead-- nay, not so much, not two...






So excellent a king, that was to this, Hyperion to a satyr;




Must I remember? Why she would hang on him, as if increase of appetite had grown by what it fed on.

«I can see now why I chose MARTINA to play the role of this character...»




So loving to my mother, that he might not beteem the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly.


And yet, within a month... (Let me not think on 't; frailty, thy name is woman !)



It is not, nor it cannot come to good. But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue...




Hail to your lordship !




Prince Hamlet turns to find himself looking at an unexpected visitor--His best friend and college buddy, Horatio. The two men rush forward to greet each other....

I am very glad to see you. But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg, Horatio ?

Horatio !

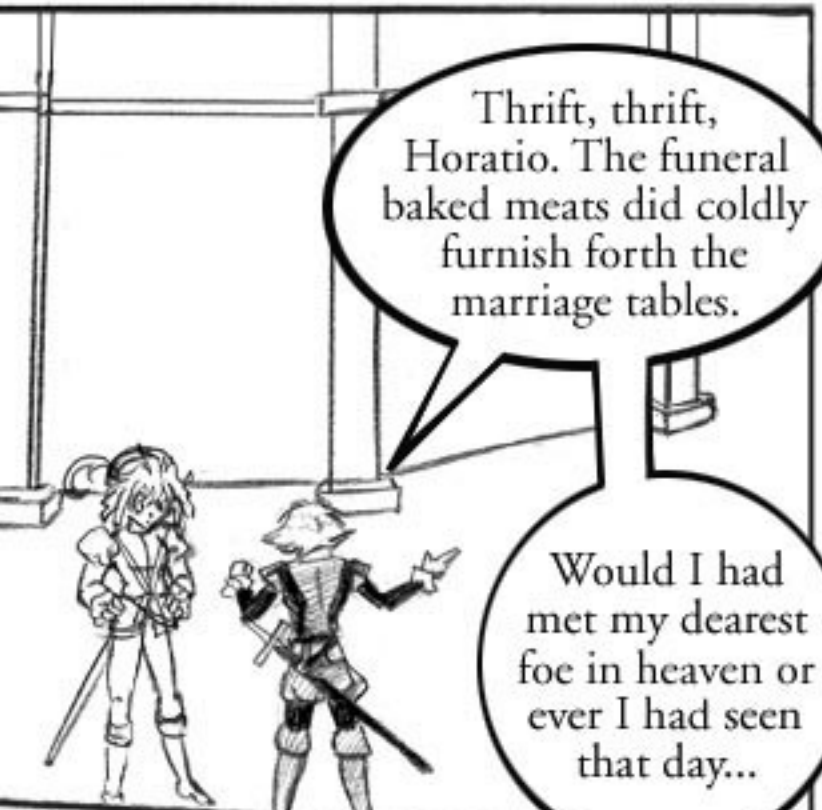


My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.




I prithee do not mock me, fellow student. I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

Indeed my lord, it followed hard upon.



Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.


Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven or ever I had seen that day...



Methinks I see my father...


Where, my lord?

In my mind's eye, Horatio...



I saw him once. He was a goodly king.


He was a man. Take him for all in all. I shall not look upon his like again.



My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

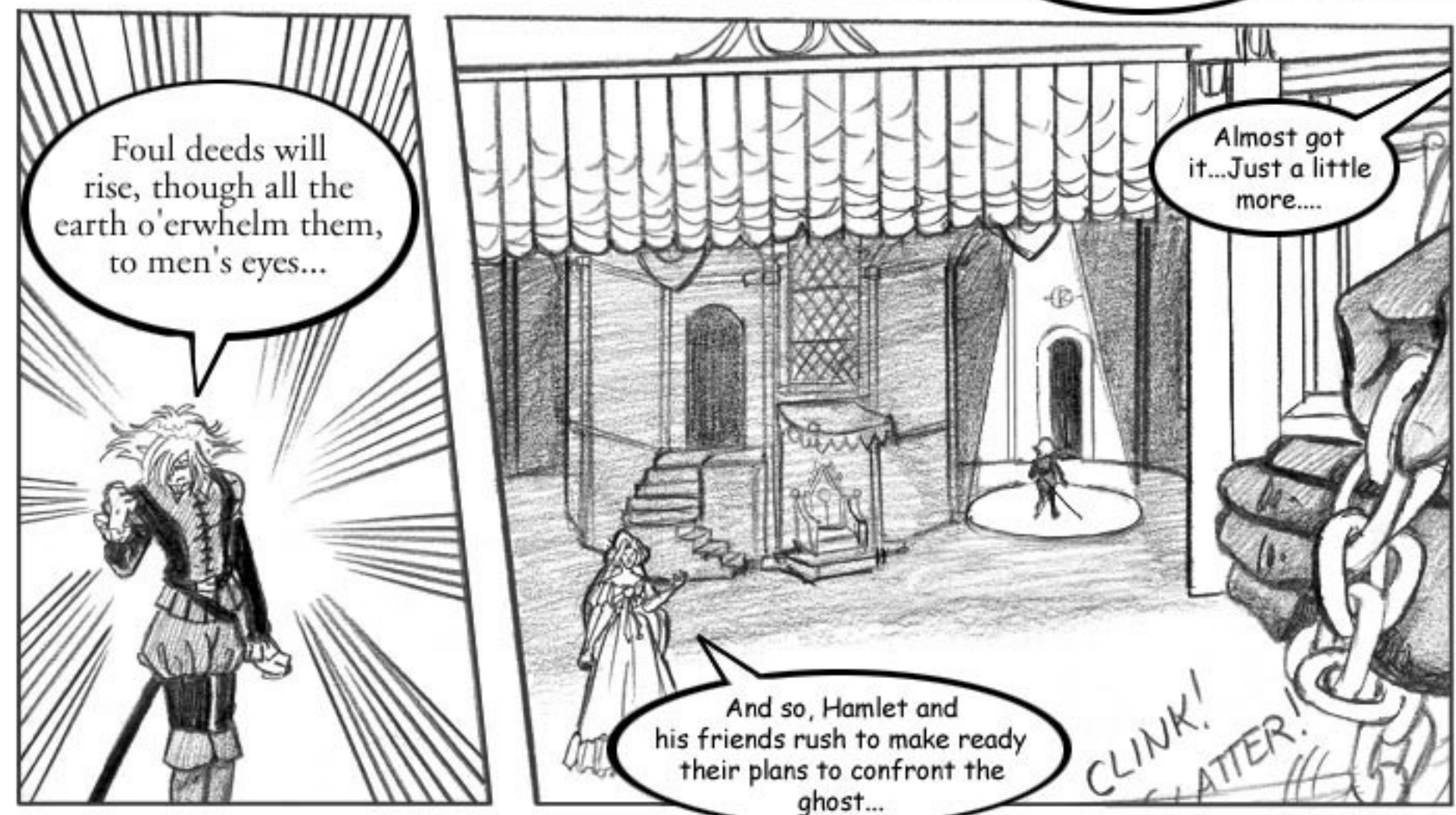
Saw who?

My lord, the king your father.



The king my FATHER?

Horatio begins to speak of the mysterious visitation he and the guardsmen had witnessed the night before. His detailed description of the ghost sends chills down Hamlet's spine, as the young prince is quick to realize that this sorrowful specter can be none other than his own recently departed and much loved father...





C'mon...
Come ON.....

THERE!
I'm free!
FREE!



Ha Haa!
And just in
time for the
beginning of
the third
scene...

Where
we'll see the
big acting
debut of my sis---
--errr, of Princess
Amelia of Seyruun
as Hamlet's girl-
friend, the tragic
Lady Ophelia...

And as soon
as the scene is
over, I'll go
behind the
stage for an
exclusive interview
with the princess
and her fellow cast-
members on how they
fee--

EEEEEE



PHOOT!



Damn! This
WOULD happen! If
there's one thing I
hate, it's losing my
dignity...

I'd better
quick cast a
spell to--

Hey...
What's this?
Someone's duct-
taped something
here to the
inside of the
chandelier...





Well lookie here! It's a bottle of Jack Daniels! It appears as if SOMEONE on the theatre maintenance staff has a drinking problem...



Such behavior! For SHAME! I shall have to dispose of this bottle in a proper fashion once this play is over...



PooF!

PooF!



C'mon, Naga! What are you waiting for? Have a little drink...

Don't do it, Naga! You KNOW what will happen if you take even the slightest sip of that unholy stuff...



No! You CAN'T! You need to be sober and alert to perform the sacred duties entrusted to you as the Head of Seyruun's Ministry of Culture!

Come on, one little nip won't hurt. And after all you've just been through, you deserve it!



Aw, give it up already! We BOTH know that I'm the one she's going to be listening to in the end...

You think I have such little influence over this woman?

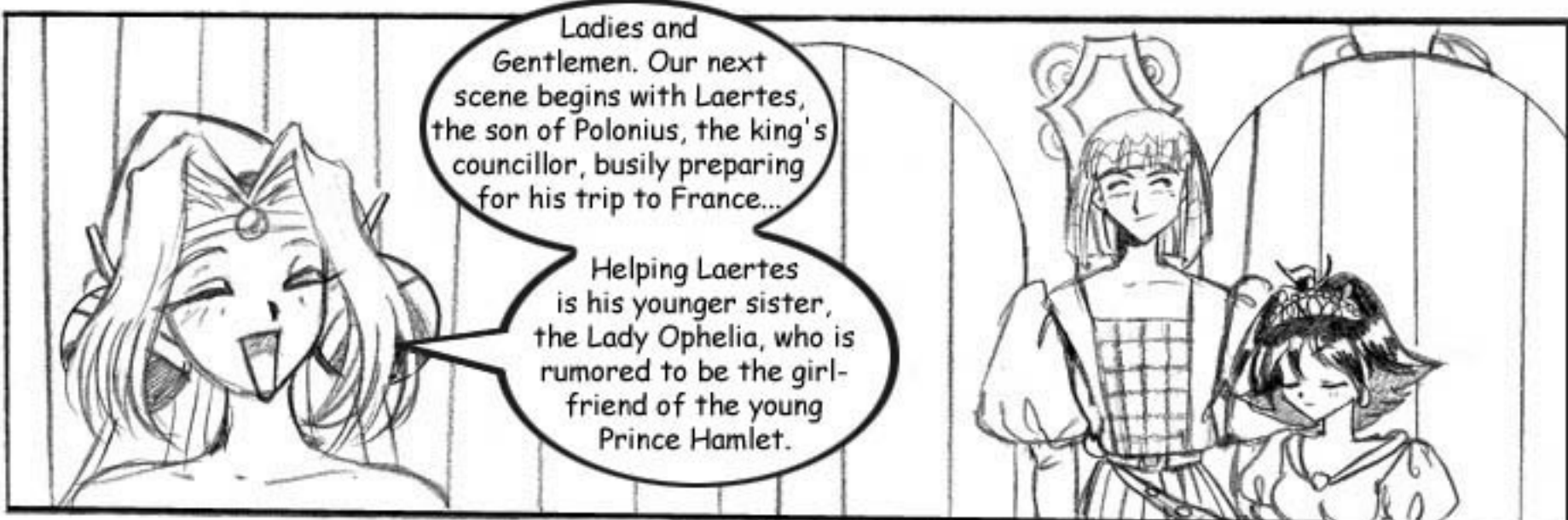


Well, I'm not gonna roll over and let you win THIS time! This time I'm gonna throw everything I have at you!

It'll be a knock-down, drag-out battle between the forces of good and evil which I don't intend to lose! I don't care if it takes all NIGHT!

**2-1/2
Seconds
Later...**





Ladies and Gentlemen. Our next scene begins with Laertes, the son of Polonius, the king's councillor, busily preparing for his trip to France...

Helping Laertes is his younger sister, the Lady Ophelia, who is rumored to be the girlfriend of the young Prince Hamlet.



We are privileged tonight to have, playing the part of the Lady Ophelia, Seyruun's very own Princess Amelia!



And... We regret to inform you...



...That tonight, the part of Laertes will be played by that no-talent, mazoku hack, Xellos Metallium...



BOOOOO !!! BOOOOOO!!!!

GO HOME!

HIS-S-S-S-S-S-

EVIL GLANCE

GASP!

SHUDDER

YIPE!

THIS SECTION
RESERVED FOR:
**GOLDEN
DRAGON**

THIS SECTION
RESERVED FOR:

Err..uhh...
S-Scene Three
begins in the part
of the castle where
Polonius and his
family have their
private
chambers...

Scene Three...

My necessities are embarked. Farewell. And sister, as the winds give benefit and convey is assistant, do not sleep, but let me hear from you...

Do you doubt that?

For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favor,

Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,

A violet in the youth of primy nature, Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting, the perfume and suppliance of a minute,

No more.

No more but so?

Think it no more.

Sigh So far, so good. Amelia is remembering her lines and Xellos seems to be behaving himself...
...for the moment...

Just relax, will ya, Zel?

We had a couple of bugs in the first two scenes, but I think we've got everything worked out by now. It should be smooth sailing from here on in...

HEY!
Let me THROUGH !!!

So try not to get too excited about-

What the hell was THAT?



I saw what happened to Rezo! Where's he been taken?

I MUST find him! Rezo! Where are you my darling?



Eris! What are you doing here backstage? We have a scene going on! Everyone must be QUIET!!!

Well, YOU'RE not being very quiet, Mr. Director Man... Tell me.... What have you done with my beloved Red Priest?

At that moment, in the Green Room...



Okay. I think I have everything I need...

Unless you can think of something ELSE I might need...

Just some advice: Watch your step. Especially on staircases...



Well, here I go...

Sigh Rezo's understudy... Once again, I'm playing second fiddle to the great Red Priest...



I said, go away! We're trying to perform a play here!

I'm not leaving until I've seen Rezo and made sure he's okay!

You'll find him resting in the Green Room...

Uh-oh...

Now get
lost ! Shoo !

GASP !

The Green
Room... Where
is tha--

♡ Rezo ! ♡

GLOMP!

Oh ! You're
all right ! I was
SO worried !

Eris !
What ARE you
doing ?

GASP
Kopii !


Grrr ! Why
are YOU here ?
What have they
done to my
beloved Rezo ?

Can't be any
worse than what you've
done to your hair...

Uh, Zel...
I think we have
a situation
developing
here...

GRRRR

QUIET !
An important
part of the
scene is
coming up...



Prince Phil is
about to make his
big entrance...

I shall the
effect of this
good lesson keep
as watchman
to my heart.

Be wary, then;
best safety lies in fear.
Youth to itself rebels,
though no one else
near.

Show me the
steep and thorny
way to heaven,
whiles, like a
puffed and reckless
libertine...

But, good my
brother, do not, as some
ungracious pastors do,

O, fear
me not...

Ahem...

...HIMSELF the
primrose path of
dalliance treads...

I stay too long.
But here my father
comes...

Yet here,
Laertes? Aboard,
aboard for
shame!

The wind sits
in the shoulder of
your sail, and you
are stayed for.

There, my
blessing with thee.

And these few
precepts in thy memory
look thou character.

Give thy thoughts no tongue, nor any unproportioned thought his act. Neither a borrower nor a lender be...

...For loan oft loses both itself and friend.

YES! JUSTICE! Become a champion of the weak...

...the poor, the oppressed! The huddled masses yearning to breathe free!

Just play along with me, okay, Amelia? It's time to show this audience some REAL acting! Let's dazzle them with Justice Speech #78!

Fight for the truth with a pure heart and victory will always be yours!

Uh. Okay...

This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

"Look out for Number One, then. Heh. Can do..."

--And wherever you go my son... Remember to keep JUSTICE in your heart always...

Err.. JUSTICE?

Huddled masses? Uh... Daddy... I don't remember reading anything like THAT in the script...

Uh...Phil... Amelia... Don't you guys think you're going just a little TOO far off script here?

Our illustrious director isn't going to like this...

At that moment, backstage...

WHAT are Prince Phil and Amelia DOING??!!



They've gone COMPLETELY off-script!

If this keeps up, we'll NEVER get the story back on track!



PSSST!
«Prince Phil! What ARE you trying to pull here? Why aren't you sticking to what's written in the script?»

«Oh, I was just thinking that Polonius' part needed a little re-tooling...»



«I'm using a technique called "ad-libbing" to put a different spin on his character! I just KNOW if he were a little more justice-minded, the audience would find him much more easy to sympathize with!»

Y-You're "ad-LIBBING"? In a Shakespearean PLAY???

Grrr...
Listen up!
Shakespeare was one of the greatest dramatists of ALL time!

A MASTER of characterization!
You...don't...second-guess....SHAKESPEARE!!!



Now get back to doing the scene the way HE wrote it!!!


..Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord...

WELL!
ALL-RIGHT then....

Unnnhhhh....


Can I go to France now?

..And do I have to come back?




«Polonius ! Your line is, "The time invests you... Go, your servants tend !"»

«I know ! I know !»




The time invests you. Go, your servants tend.



Ahem.... Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well what I have said to you...


«Lucky me... *Groan*....»

Farewell....




'Tis in my memory locked, And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

With his son now departing for France, Polonius now turns his attention towards his daughter, using this meeting as a chance to dispense some worthwhile fatherly advice...




What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you ?

So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.



Affection, puh ! You speak like a green girl unsifted in such perilous circumstance. Do you believe his "tenders" as you call them ?



He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders of his affection to me....

I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Marry, I will teach you. Think yourself a baby, that you have ta'en these tenders for true pay, which are not sterling.

My lord, he hath importuned me with love in honorable fashion--

Well... It SEEMS everything's getting back on track, but I can't help but wonder what's going to go wrong next...

Backstage...

Allright. I'm ready for the next scene. Where do I go?

I've... taken care of Eris. You won't have to worry about her anymore...

Oh my... You didn't KILL her again, did you?

Kopii!


I thought you and Eris were going to fight each other. What happened?

Of course not! Nowadays, I know better than to resort to such irrational methods when it comes to dealing with my problems...

I dealt with her in a mature and efficient manner...


HELP!

I can't SEE! Kopii! You big DUMB JERK!!




I can't
see! I can't
SEE!

Oh. So THAT
would explain why
you're dressed like
that...



Allright!
From now on, I
want everyone to shut
up and behave
themselves!




Kopii, get
your helmet back
and get ready to
make your big
entrance.


As soon as
Phil and Amelia
finish out there,
the curtain goes
up!

In few,
Ophelia, do not
believe his vows,
for they are
specious.

I would not,
in plain terms, from
this time forth have
you slander any moment
leisure as to give words
or talk with the
Lord Hamlet.



Look to it, I
charge you. Come
your ways!




Look to--
.....ARGGGH!!


This is
the first
time...
I've ever had
to make a
speech...

...without being
able to use the word,
"JUSTICE"
anywhere in it....


What is
it, Daddy?



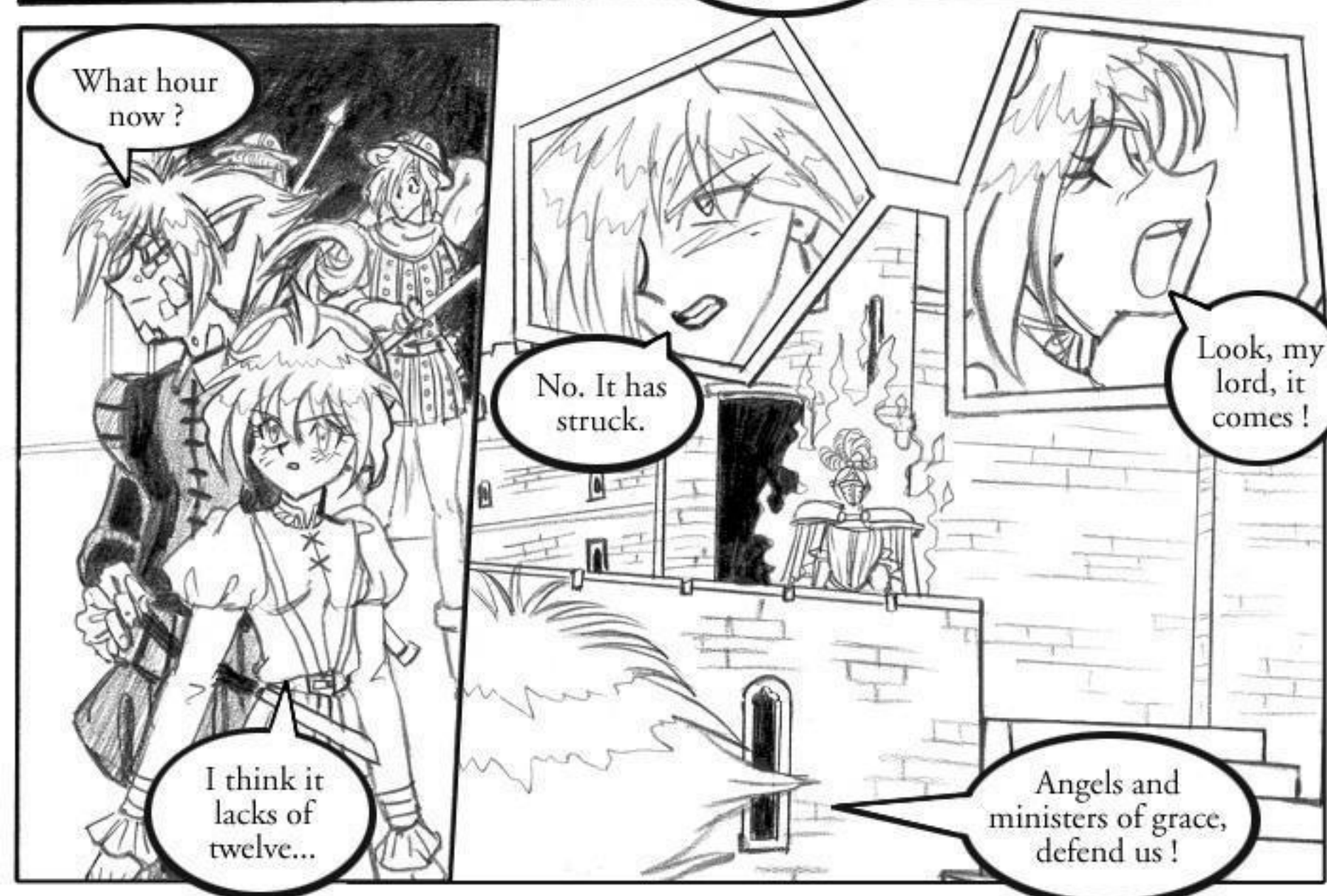
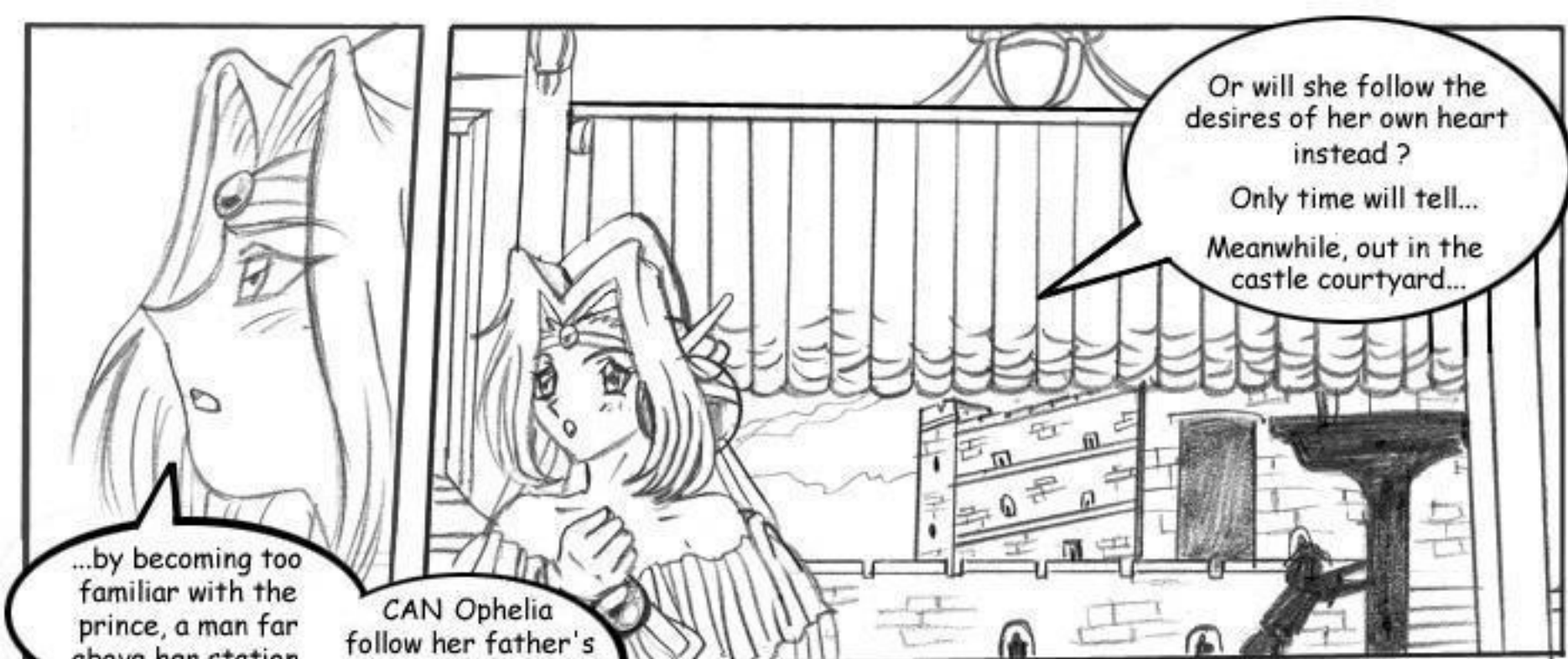
Hang in
there, Daddy...
We're almost
done with the
scene...



I shall obey,
my lord.



And so, Polonius
warns his daughter
about the dangers
she is risking...





It beckons
you to go away
with it as if it
some impart-
ment did
desire to you
alone...

It waves
you to a more
removed ground,
but do not go
with it.

No, by
no means.

Why,
what
should be the
fear ?

I do not set my
life at a pin's fee. And
for my soul, what can it
do to that, being a thing
immortal as itself ?

It waves
me forth again.
I'll follow it.

It appears as if something is
rotten in the state of Denmark.
Hamlet breaks free from his
friends and rushes forward to
follow the ghost...

Whither wilt
thou lead me ?

Speak.
I'll go no
further...

Mark
me.



I will.

My hour is almost come when I to sulf'rous and tormenting flames must render up myself.

Alas, poor ghost!

Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold.

Speak. I am bound to hear.

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

What?

I am thy father's spirit...

Doomed for a certain term to walk the night and for the day confined to fast in fires till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away.


But that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison house, I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul...

But this eternal blazon must not be to ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O list! If thou didst ever thy dear father love...

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder!

FLIP!

MURDER?



Murder
most foul.


I find
thee apt;

Now, Hamlet,
hear. 'Tis given out
that, sleeping in my
orchard, a serpent
stung me.

So the whole
ear of Denmark
is by a forged
process of my
death rankly
abused.




But know, thou
noble youth, the serpent
that did sting thy
father's life now wears
his crown.



O, my
prophetic soul !
My uncle !

Ay, that
incestuous, that
adulterate beast,
with witchcraft
of his wit, with
traitorous
gifts--


Haste me to
know 't, that I,
with wings as
swift as
meditation or
the thoughts of
love, may
sweep to my
revenge.



--won to his
shameful lust the
will of my seeming-
virtuous queen.

O, Hamlet,
what a falling off
was there !

From me,
whose love was of
that dignity that
it went hand in hand
even with the vow I
made to her in
marriage, and to
decline upon a wretch
whose natural gifts
were poor to those
of mine...



But soft, methinks
I scent the morning air.
Brief let me be....

Sleeping within my orchard,
my custom always of the
afternoon....

Upon my secure
hour, thy uncle stole...



With juice of
cursed hebena in a
vial....

And in the porches
of my ears did pour the
leprous distilment...



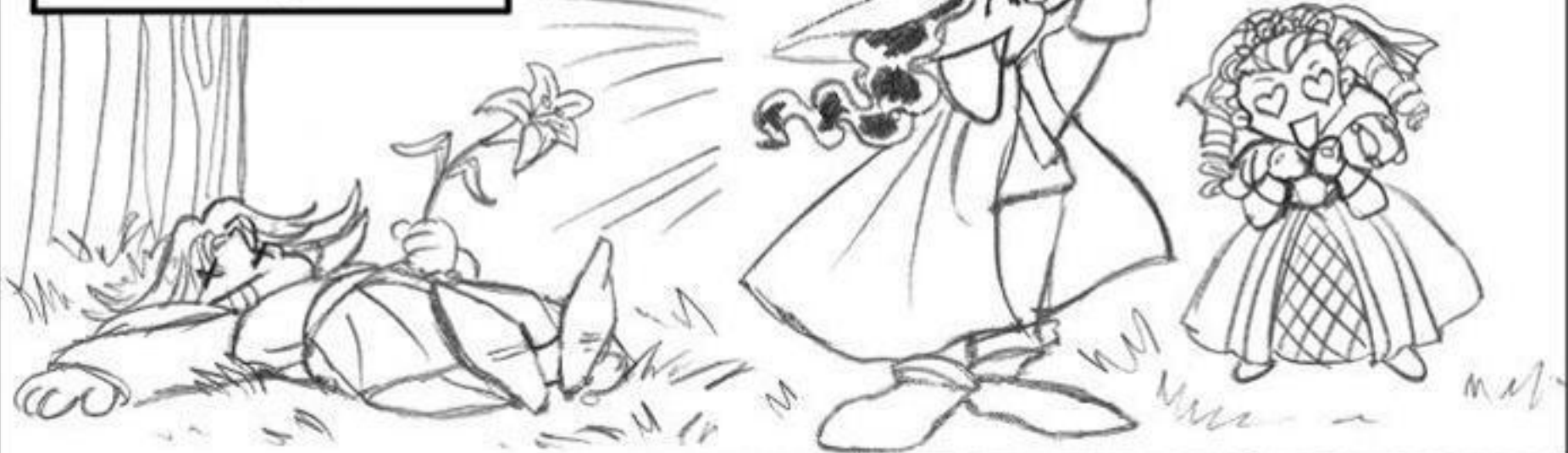
heh
heh
heh



THUD !!

GYACK!!

Thus was I, sleeping, by
a brother's hand, of life,
of crown, of queen
at once dispatched...



O horrible, O
horrible, most
horrible ! If thou
hast nature in thee,
bear it not.

Let not the royal
bed of Denmark be a
couch for luxury and
damnèd incest.

Adieu,
adieu, adieu.
Remember
me...

Fare thee well
at once. The glowworm
shows the matin to
be near and 'gins to
pale his uneffectual
fire.

As the rising sun
approaches, the old king
exhorts his son to seek
justice for the crime
committed against him.

Ay, thou poor
ghost, whiles memory
holds a seat in this
distracted globe--

WHO-AAHH!!

CRASSSHH !!

RATTLE !

THUD !

Son of a--
YAAAAAGGHH!!!
OW !!!



Waitress....
Separate checks,
please...



I told you to
be careful when
walking down
stairs...



Sigh
Two cast members
seriously injured, only
14 more to go...



My lord,
my lord !

Lord
Hamlet !

Hamlet's friends
rush to his aid,
fearing the worst
from his encounter
with the ghost. They
find the prince in a
deep state of shock...



How is 't,
my noble
lord ?

What news,
my lord ?

Good my
lord, tell it.

No, You
will reveal it.

Not I, my
lord, by heaven.

How say you,
then ? Would heart
of man once think
it ? But you'll be
secret ?


O, wonderful !

Touching this
vision here, it is an
honest ghost--that
let me tell you. For
your desire to know
what is between us,
o'ermaster it as you
may...




And now,
good friends, give
me one poor
request.

What is 't,
my lord? We
will...

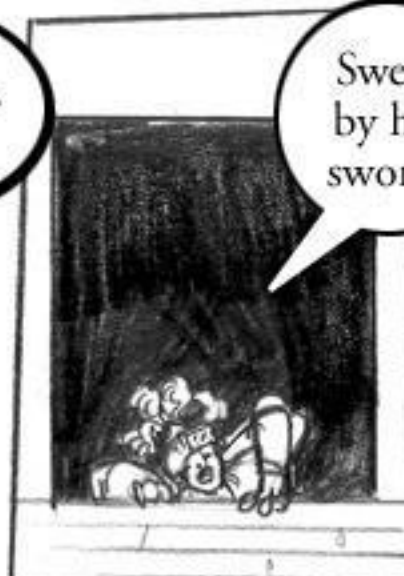


Never make
known what you have
seen tonight.


Swear upon
my sword.



Urrk....
Swear.




Swear
by his
sword.



O day and
night, but this
is wondrous
strange.


There are
more things in
heaven and
earth,
Horatio...



Than are
dreamt of in
your
philosophy.

But come.

I perchance
hereafter shall think
meet to put an antic
disposition on—



Swearmfffurk...



Uh-oh...
errr...ahhh....
Rest, rest
perturbed
spirit...

It looks
like he IS
resting,
Director
Man...

Uh,
I think
he may be
UN-
CON-
SCIOUS.




Sigh...
So gentlemen,
With all my love
I do commend me
to you...



Let us go
in together.
And still
your fingers
on your lips,
I pray...

The time is
out of joint.
O curs'd
spite !

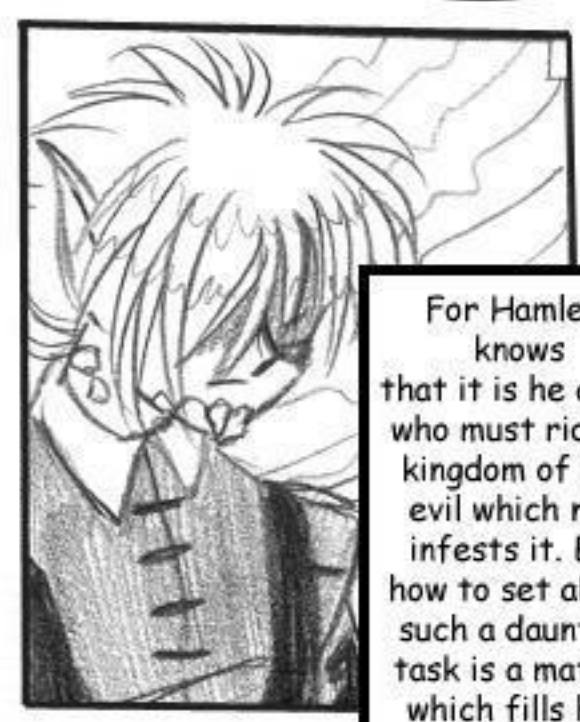


That ever I
was born to set
it right !




Okay ladies.
You grab Kopii's
arms, Gourry and
I will grab his
legs...

And so, our first act concludes with our noble
hero staring bleak Destiny in the face, his
world lying in shattered pieces at his feet,
with deceit and darkness looming over him
like a cold shadow...



For Hamlet
knows
that it is he alone
who must rid his
kingdom of the
evil which now
infests it. But
how to set about
such a daunting
task is a matter
which fills him
with worry...



After all, his adversary is none other than
the most powerful man in the kingdom, his
own uncle. Will Hamlet have what it takes to
successfully carry out his crusade for justice?
Or will he be crushed underfoot by the forces
which will surely seek to destroy him?

Stay
tuned
for
**ACT
TWO !**

And so,
the first
act of
our play
has come
to a
success-
ful
end...



...although not without
a **FEW** casualties...

...chief among
them, the sanity
of a certain
chimera...



How
could you
do that to
me? How
could you go
off-script
like that?

We're
sorry, Mr.
Zelgadis. We
didn't mean to
make you mad. We
were only trying
to make the
play better by
making it more
...inspiring.



Grrr!
This is supposed
to be a serious
play! Not a soapbox
for your justice-
crazed
propaganda!

The **NEXT**
time you pull
something like
that, I'd appre-
ciate it if it
wasn't during
one of **MY**
productions!



Well, Mr. Zelgadis,
perhaps **YOUR** kind of
productions aren't the
kind of things that the
Seyruun Royal Ministry of
Culture **SHOULD** be
sponsoring. This play of
yours **DOES** seem excess-
ively gloomy... Perhaps
our grant money could
best be spent elsewhere...



Now
w-wait a
minute!

AFTER
tonight's
opening perfor-
mance?



Y-You're
taking this all
wrong! I **AM** open
to new ideas on the
interpretation of
this play...

Surely we
could discuss
this matter and
come to some kind
of compromise
solution...



Allright
then. Later
tonight...



Sigh
Dammitall....



So, Zel....
Prince Phil is footing
the bill for this whole
thing... Well **THAT**
explains a lot!

It would explain why you cast Amelia in the role of the female lead, even though she's nothing LIKE Ophelia. And even though there are better actresses around who could--

Of course I would ! And with Amelia's upbeat outlook on life, she'd make a much more ideal Horatio...

Actresses like YOU, you mean ? You think YOU'd make a good tragic heroine ?

No. It wouldn't work. She's got too much of a figure...

Oh, I SEE... SHE'S got too much of a figure...

Is that the REAL reason you made her your love interest in this play Mr. Director ?

No ! NO ! I gave her the lead because... she's not as good an actress as you are !

What I mean is, she's good enough to play the female lead, but she's not good enough to play a man...

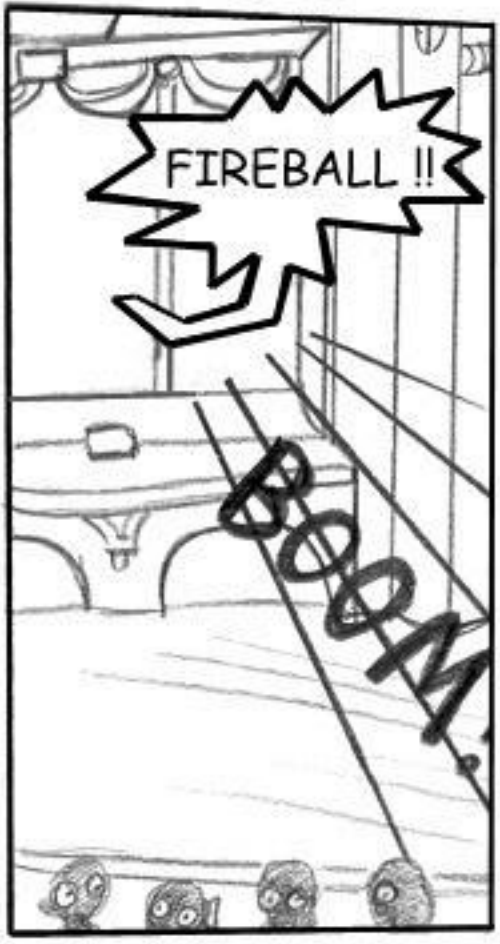
Er... She hasn't got YOUR versatility...

...is a FIGURE !



Yes ! Exactly ! NO ! WAAAAIIIIIT !!

No, she hasn't... All SHE'S got...





Nice going,
Lina...
coff coff
Vrumugen! Get
the fire
extinguisher!
COFF!

Well folks,
it's First Inter-
mission time! And this
is Princess Amelia
wil Tesla
Seyruun!



Speaking to
you as a duly
appointed
representative
of the Royal
Seyruun
Ministry of
Culture...

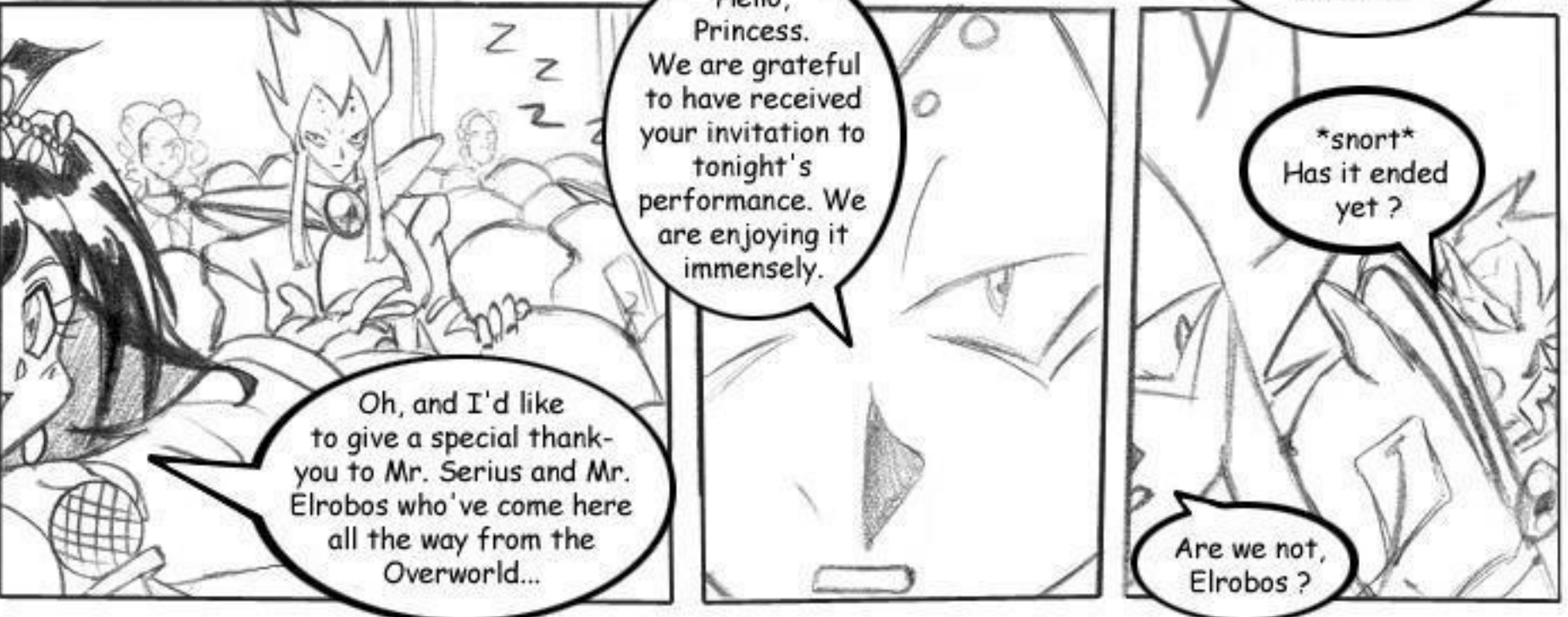
...And on
behalf of the
head of the
Ministry, who has
stepped out for a
while, probably on
some...important
business...

♪
Naga in the sk-y-y-y with
diamonds! (Hic!) ♪
Naga in the sk-y-y-y with
diamonds! ♪



So, in
her place, I
shall be out
and about visiting
with the
esteemed
members of
tonight's
audience...

...But first I'd
like to thank several
groups who've made it out
to tonight's play, among
them, the Atlas City Brass
Rackets Association, and the
Sacred Sisterhood of the
Fascist Feminists of
Femille...



Hello,
Princess.
We are grateful
to have received
your invitation to
tonight's
performance. We
are enjoying it
immensely.


Oh, and I'd like
to give a special thank-
you to Mr. Serius and Mr.
Elrobos who've come here
all the way from the
Overworld...

snort
Has it ended
yet?

Are we not,
Elrobos?



Hm. I thought we had invited Mr. Almace too. Where might he be?




I am sorry. I am late. Have I missed much of the performance?


Here I am...




My apologies. I had difficulty in finding a place to park.



Only the entire first act...




Might I suggest, princess, that the Atlas City Council look into ways of providing adequate special-events parking for the benefit of those of its visitors who may try to attend such occasions?



Yes. Serius and I have noticed that your time-management skills seem to be sorely lacking...


As are many of your other skills...

Might WE suggest, Almace, that the next time you try to attend a special event in another universe that you plan on starting out earlier?




I believe that these and other perceived shortcomings of yours...

...Are what led Elrobos into believing that it was necessary to terminate you towards the end of TRY... Keep that in mind, will you?



You know, Serius, Vegeta from Dragonball Z called me recently... He wants you to give him his hairstyle back.



WHAT was that you just said?



Nothing, Pinky. Don't worry your pointy little head about it. Now move your ass so I can sit down...



Yes. It appears to be your intention to stir up trouble...

Correct me if I'm wrong, but you two are gay, aren't you?

STUNNED SILENCE

You'd be well advised to take your seat and watch the play in a reserved and solemn manner as Serius and I have been doing...

Aren't these comments just a little OOC for you, Almace?

Ha! I always suspected it...

Almace! Have you gone insane?... Wh-what are you trying to insinuate?

Oh my! It's almost time for Act Two to start! I'd better be getting backstage...



Well, loyal viewers, until next intermission... This is Princess Amelia...

Signing off.... Over and out!

Hey! The floor of this theater is all sticky! I wonder why THAT might be... Or do I really want to know,gentlemen?



NEXT intermission, Daddy, YOU'RE going out to do the interviews with the members of the theater audience!

I'll stick to acting! I only hope Act Two goes more smoothly than the last one!

Hamlet: the Manga Act Two

In the first act of our story, the young Prince Hamlet learned of the shocking murder of his beloved father by his scheming and power-hungry Uncle Claudius...

Some months have now passed since the night of that terrible discovery, and during that time, our hero has begun to undergo an unsettling change in personality...

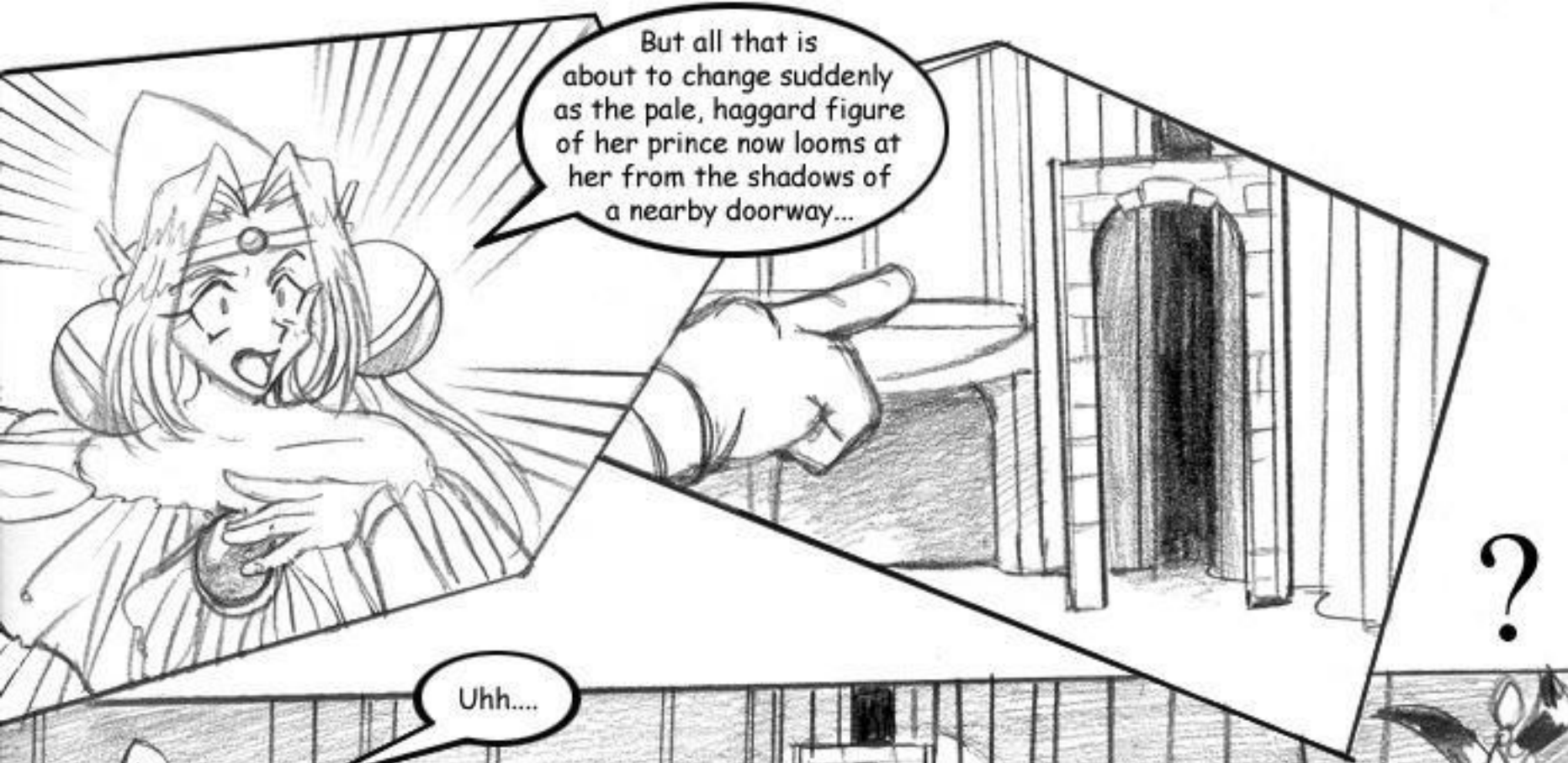
Those who are closest to the prince have begun to notice his slow and inexorable slide into melancholy and despair, but as to what could be the cause of such behavior...

...to most people, THAT remains a profound mystery...

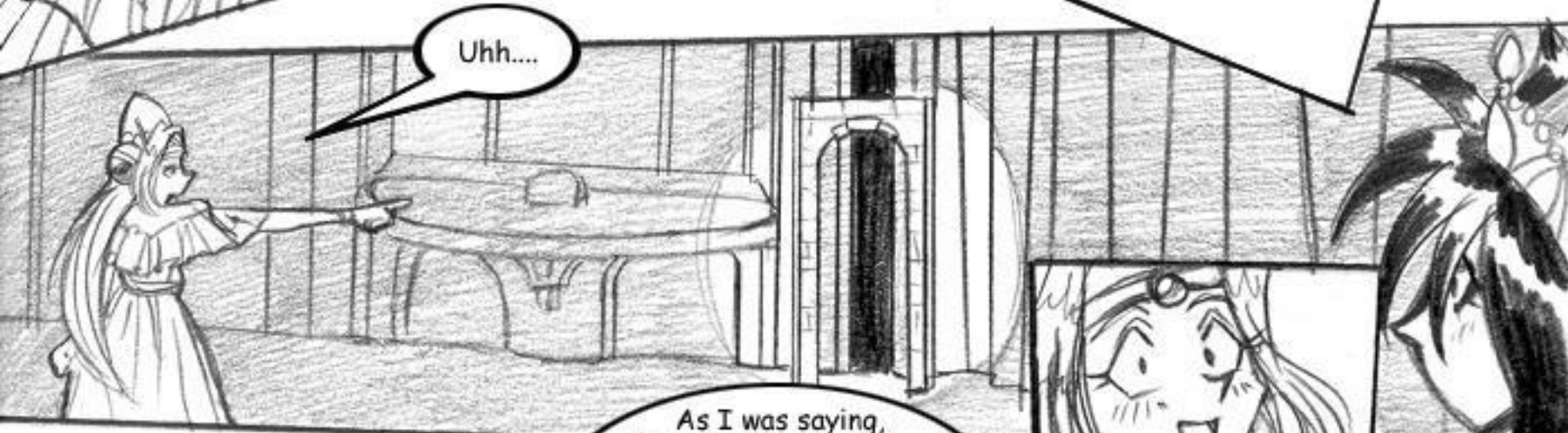
Still, life goes on within the confines of the castle...

As Scene One opens, we see the Lady Ophelia sitting in her chambers, hard at work with her usual, wholesome pursuits...

During the past few weeks, she has obeyed her father's command to stay away from her beloved Hamlet, so she is thus far completely unaware of the strange change in behavior which has come over him...



But all that is about to change suddenly as the pale, haggard figure of her prince now looms at her from the shadows of a nearby doorway...



Uhh....

As I was saying, all that is about to change suddenly as the pale, haggard figure of her prince now looms at her from the shadows of a nearby doorway...



Uh, Where's Zel?

I don't know...



It says here he is supposed to appear on stage with "his doublet all unbraced"...and..."with a look so piteous in purport as if he had been loosed out of hell..."

Well, then. Where is he?

Here he comes...



Hey there, Director Man...


Oh my...

Unhhh....



Damn you, Lina! Of all the things you could've done, why'd you have to FIREBALL me?

Now my costume's ruined! I'll have to get Rezo to cast one of his "Time-Reversal" spells on it to get it back in order...




My my, Zelgadis. That's quite a make-up job you've done on yourself! It really DOES look like you've just been loosed out of hell!

Make-up?


AHEM! ALL THAT IS ABOUT TO CHANGE AS THE PALE, HAGGARD FIGURE OF HER PRINCE NOW LOOMS AT HER FROM THE SHADOWS OF A NEARBY DOORWAY!!!

Come ON, Zelgadis, LOOM already!




Hey, Mr. Olivier... Isn't that your cue?

Wha--?



Oh DAMN! Hold on! I'm coming!!!



Gee. I wonder what's taking Mr. Zelgadis so long to--



GASP!

EEK!!!





For a few terrifying moments, his reddened eyes run down the length of her body, examining her from head to toe. Then, after what seems like an eternity, he lets out a long sigh and stumbles back out of the room, his cold eyes never leaving her for a second.



Ophelia reacts calmly to the situation...

My lord,
as I was sewing
in my closet,
Lord Hamlet,
with his doublet
all unbraced...

His
stockings fouled,
ungartered, and
down-gyved to
his ankle, pale
as his shirt, his
knees knocking
each other,

And with a
look so piteous
in purport...

As if he had
been loosed out
of hell to speak
of horrors--

he comes
before me.

Mad for
thy love?

My lord, I
do not know...

But truly
I do fear it.

What said
he?

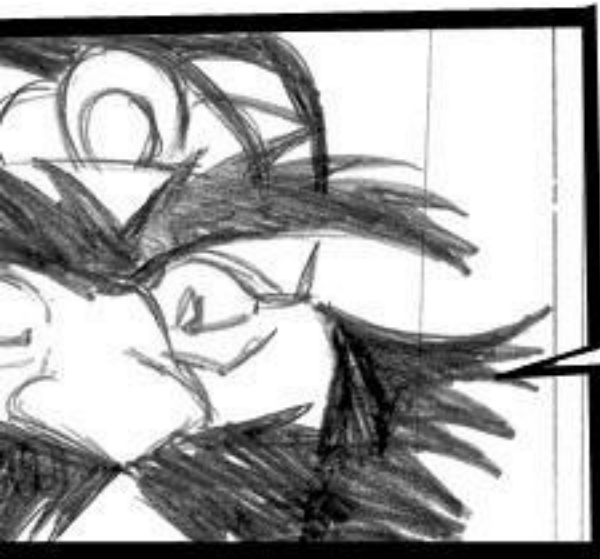
He took me by the wrist
and held me hard. Then
goes he to the length of
all his arm, and, with the
other hand thus o'er his
brow, he falls to such
perusal of my face, as he
would draw it.

Long stayed he so. At last, a
little shaking of mine arm,
and thrice his head thus waving up
and down, he raised a sigh so
piteous and profound
as it did seem to shatter
all his bulk and end
his being.



That done, he
lets me go and, with his
head over his shoulder
turned, he seemed to find
his way without his eyes,
for out o'doors he
went without their
helps...

And to the
last bended their
light on me.



Come, go
with me. I will
go seek the
king.

This is the
very ecstasy of
love,



Um, Daddy...
I thought we weren't
going to do anymore of that
JUSTICE stuff tonight...
Mr. Zeldas doesn't
like it...

Whose violent property
fordoes itself and leads the will
to desperate undertakings as
oft as any passions under heaven--
like, for instance, the passion for
JUSTICE !!!!



Wha--?
Oh yeah.
Right...
FINE, then...

AHEM!

I am sorry. What,
have you given him any
hard words of late?



No, my
good lord, but as
you did command
I did repel his letters
and denied his
access to me.



That hath made him mad. I am sorry that with better heed and judgment I had not coted him. I feared he did but trifle and meant to wrack thee.

But beshrew my jealousy!

Come, go we to the King. This must be known, which, being kept close, might move...



More grief to hide than hate to utter love.



Polonius, with daughter in hand, rushes off to find King Claudius...



Being a man of an ambitious nature, he is no doubt pleased at the thought that his daughter might become the next Queen of Denmark...

But as he'll soon learn and as we'll soon see, ambition makes for a dangerous compass to guide one's actions by...



Well Daddy, I sure hope Mr. Zelgadis is happy with how THAT scene turned out...



Certain in his mind that he now knows the true cause for Hamlet's disturbing behavior...

Mr. Zelgadis?

Please hurry...





Look. I'm working as fast as I can. Lina really did a number on your costume.

If it were, I'd reverse it back to the time you asked me to be in your play at which point, I'd shove that script down your --

You think reversing time is an easy thing to do?

What was that, grandfather/great-grandfather?



Hey, Director Man! Phil and Amelia are back... Isn't it time for Scene 2 to begin?

Y-Yes...



Uh-oh. Where ARE they?

Uh, who?

They said they'd be here by now! They said they'd be on time!

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern! Don't you remember? They're in the next scene!!

HEY!



Relax, Chimera Man... Don't get your tights in a bundle...

We're here... As promised...



So... You are...

YIKES!

GASP!

Gee, you'd think a guy as big as him would be hard to lose...

Th-There he is! Over there!

Heh. Don't worry. I'm here. I wouldn't miss this for the world. This'll be fun, won't it, Xellos, ol' buddy?

Why yes... My, my, Garv. You're looking well. Is that a new trenchcoat I see you wearing?

GASP!
Garv! Why ARE you wearing that? Why aren't you in your costume?

It's stylish, but don't you think it's a little out of period for the time this play is set in?

This IS my costume! I'm going out on stage like this. You got a problem with that?

OF COURSE I do! People didn't wear trenchcoats in the Middle Ages! And they didn't sling swords over their shoulders like that, either!

You got any proof of that, Stone Boy?

GACK!!

Uhhh...

No... Not really. I suppose it isn't THAT big a deal...

After all, a little historical anachronism never hurt any play...



Now. Help me up. I have to get the next scene started...

Aww. Do you have to get up? It feels kinda nice with both of us lying here on the floor together...

Yes, but I would've preferred that we keep the tragedy confined to the stage where it belongs!

I'm wise to all your tricks. Nothing you do is going to faze me. I know you're the type that will do ANYTHING to get a rise out of someone.

Knock it off, Xellos. If you think that "yaoi routine" of yours is going to upset me tonight, you're wrong.

...even wear a ridiculously oversized codpiece, which I KNOW isn't part of the costume I designed for you and which, frankly, doesn't impress me much...

Codpiece? I'm not wearing any codpiece, Zelgadis...

.....



Heh heh. I have to say, Zelgadis, that I certainly DO get a "rise" out of teasing you...

Mr. Zelgadis--

Act 2 Scene 2

As was mentioned before, those close to Hamlet have begun to notice his descent into madness and melancholy...

King Claudius and Queen Gertrude, out of concern for the young prince, now try to get to the bottom of his strange behavior.

They send a message to two of Hamlet's close boyhood friends, a pair of noblemen who go by the names of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. King Claudius hopes that by having these gentlemen speak with Hamlet, that they will be able to find out what's ultimately troubling the boy.

Once the two men arrive at the castle, the king summons them to the throne room to meet with them.

Playing the part of Rosencrantz, will be the mazoku lord, Gaav, the Demon Dragon King...

And the part of Guildenstern, then, will be played by the mazoku lord of the underworld, Hellmaster Phibrizzo...

<<...Although why Zelgadis would want to give roles to these mazoku scum is beyond me...>>

I-I don't know if I can go through with this scene. Why does it have to be THOSE MONSTERS?

Be brave, darling.. We'll get through this alright...



I'll just...
start the scene off....
....calmly...



Zangie, darling!
I'll pray to the
monstrous Zoamel-
gustav for your
safety !!

Suddenly, I
don't feel very
calm....

Welcome dear Rosencrantz
and Guildenstern. Moreover
that we much did long to see
you, the need we have to use
you did provoke our hasty
sending.

Something have
you heard of Hamlet's
transformation, so call it,
sith nor th' exterior nor
the inward man resembles
that it was...



Sigh
Why can't this
crazy woman find
some OTHER made-up
deity to patronize ?

What it should
be, more than his father's
death, that thus hath put
him so much from th'
understanding of himself
I cannot dream of.





Ahem...



A-HEM...



Both your
Majesties might,
by the sovereign
power--



Both your
Majesties might,
by the sovereign
power--



Hey kid. I'M
Rosencrantz,
remember?



Yeah, well,
I wanna be
Rosencrantz. You can
be the other guy,
Whatsisname...



I don't WANT
to be the other guy.
I want to be the guy whose
part I practiced for--
Rosencrantz!

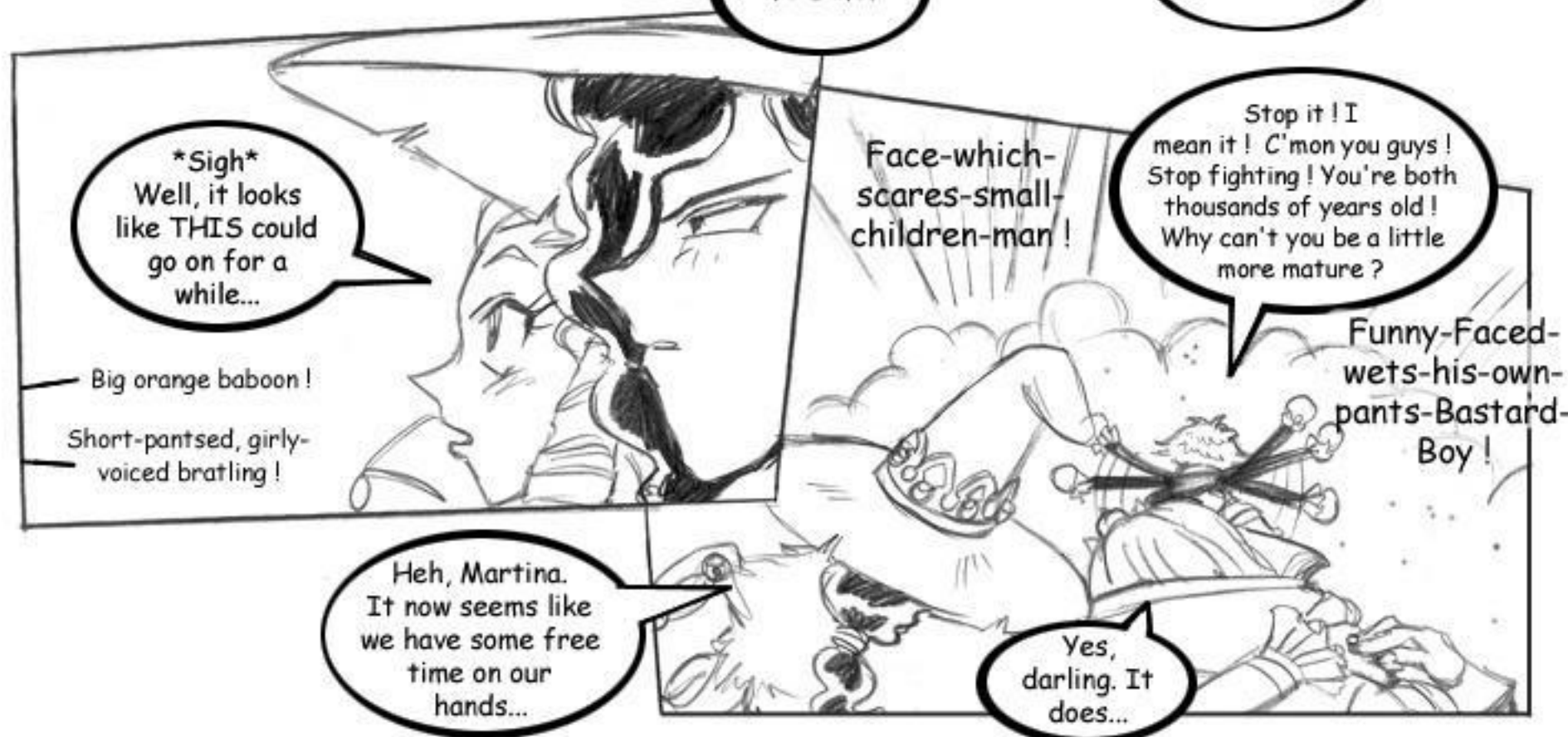


T.S.
I'M Rosencrantz
now...



FREAK!

SQUIRT!





You know, all of this shouting and releasing of passionate emotion gives me the mind to do something I've been itching to do all evening...



And what might THAT be, Zangie?



Zangie?



Gourry! I challenge you to a duel! Quick! Grab your sword of Light and meet me in the back of the theater!

Gee, I dunno...



Come on! This is the perfect chance to finally find out which of us is the best swordsman of all! I have my Howling Sword with me...



Umm...but... Zeldadis might not like it if we went off to fight a duel...

Oh, HE won't notice! I get the feeling he's going to be tied up for a LONG time with those two mazoku lords... Come on! Where's your warrior's spirit? Your sense of honor as a fighter and a mercenary?



W-Well... I left my Sword of Light in my dressing room. I'll have to go get it!



Oh NO, you don't, Gourry! You're not going to get yourself into a fight NOW!



You're going to stay here and help us FINISH this stupid play so we can have us that cast party buffet as soon as possible!



Oh...I suppose... Oh well. By the time I fetched my Sword of Light, Zel might be done arguing with the dark lords anyway...



HERE you are, Gourry! Your Sword of Light! I took the liberty of fetching it for you!

So now you WILL have the time to fight your duel if you want to!



Xellos? Just WHAT do you think you're up to?

You're not against the idea of "friendship", are you?



Encouraging these two men to fight each other at a time like this! You're up to your old game of trying to cause chaos and trouble!

No. Just the idea of YOU.

Not at all, Filia! I'm just trying to help out a dear old friend...



Come on, Lina! Cut it out already! Whatever I did, I'm SORRY!



Ha! Sure you are! All you men ever think about is engaging in stupid and pointless violence!



Yikes! I'm sure glad I don't have some SHREWISH woman making MY life a total misery...



ZANGULUS !!!!



ULP!

How DARE you
leave me alone with those
scary monsters so you can
run off and play with
your sword!

My ASS
you didn't!

Arghh!
STAND STILL,
NAMAGOMI!!!

Aah, I didn't
mean to leave you alone.
I'd never think to put you
in any kind of danger,
my sweet!

Well, Gourry?
You insensitive
lout! What have
you got to say
for yourself?

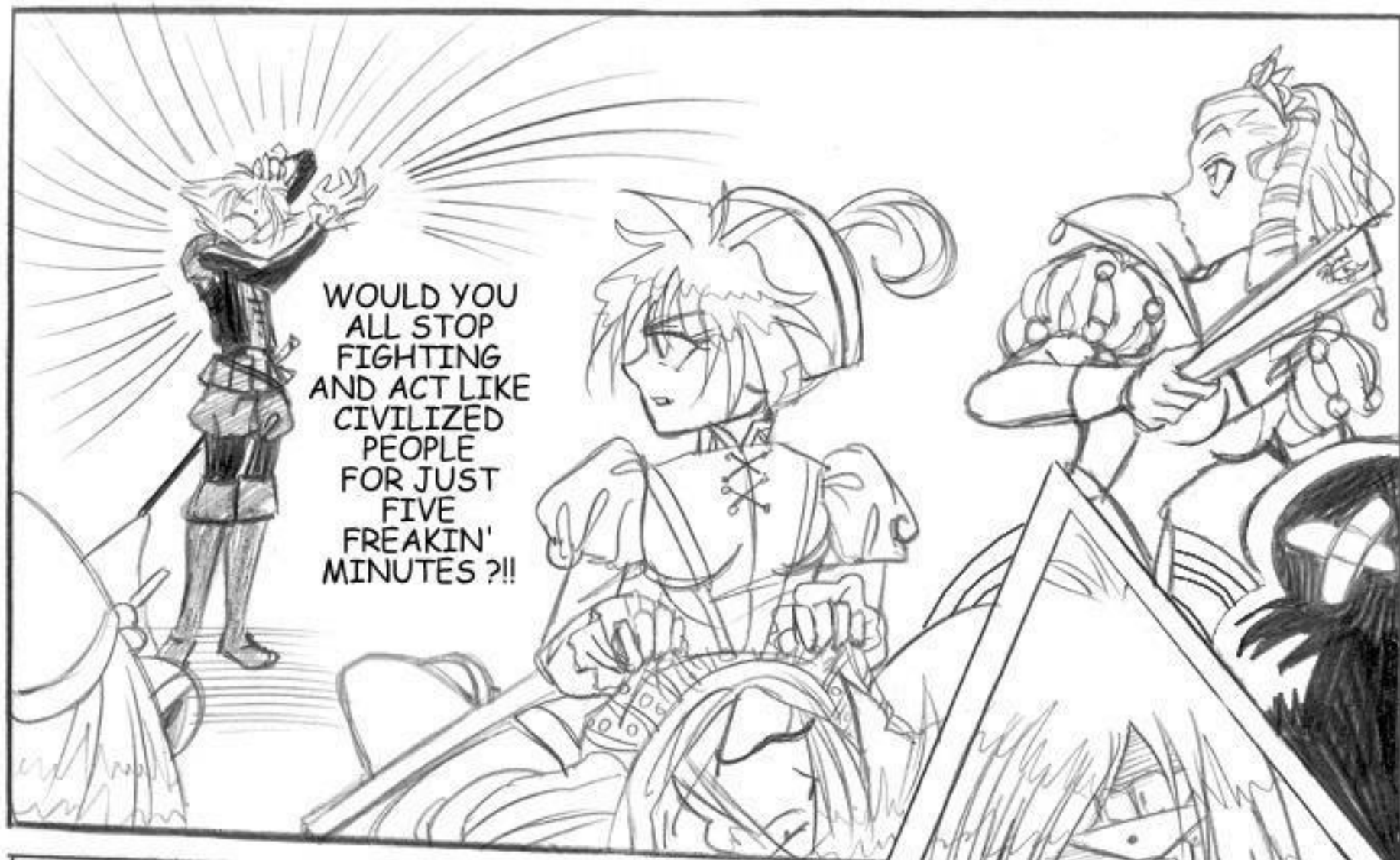
WHOMP

GA-A-A-C-K!!

Your actions
have greatly dis-
pleased the monstrous
Zoamelgustav!
Repent NOW!

YARGH!

HEEYYYYY!!!



WOULD YOU
ALL STOP
FIGHTING
AND ACT LIKE
CIVILIZED
PEOPLE
FOR JUST
FIVE
FREAKIN'
MINUTES ?!!



WELL !

Geez, Director
Man. Don't have a
COW...

Can we get
you anything ?
A glass of water ?
Some chewable
Prozac ? A
psychiatrist,
maybe ?

PANT !
PANT !
PANT !



Man ! I've never
seen anyone lose their
temper so quickly...

Yeah.
This guy's got
some major
control
issues.

We'd
better watch
ourselves. He
could snap and
go psycho
on us...



So, have you
two finally decided
which of you is to
be Rosencrantz ?



Not yet,
but I'm sure
if we try,
we can come
up with a
way to settle
this
matter...

There must be some kind of civilized solution we can reach...

SOME kind of non-violent compromise we could work out...

Sigh

Hmmmm...

Hey! I've got this GREAT IDEA!!

SNAP!

Well whatever it is you decide to do, PLEASE hurry...

KA-BOOM!

Huh? What th-?

Whoops.

I reaaaaally oughta get out of the habit of snapping my fingers like that whenever I get a great idea... Oh well...

Live and learn. Eh, Garv?

Owww...



Oh my GOSH!
He VAPORIZED
Garv!

Boy. We
never saw THAT
one coming, now
did we?

Gee, I'm
real SORRY,
Garv!



The hell you
are! You did that on
PURPOSE, you little
rugrat!

Honestly, Garv!
I thought I had the
SAFETY on this thing!
REALLY!



SIGH
Why.... WHY?

Well, don't
think for a minute,
Hellbrat, that THIS
is gonna stop
me!

I'm still IN
this play! And
I'M gonna be the
one playing
Rosencrantz! You
GOT THAT ?!




Okay!
Okay! You
can be
Rosencrantz!
The part's
all yours!




Sheesh!
You blast a
guy to ashes
and he gets
all
TOUCHY...

Geez Garv, you're
almost getting to be as big
a crybaby as that spiky-
haired servant of yours...


OH
MY
GOD !!




Garv-sama!
What have they
done to you?!



Hold on, master!
I'm coming! Wait
for me!

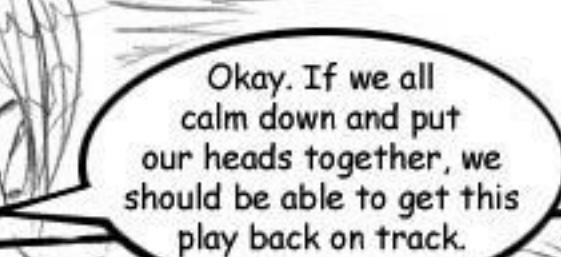


I'll make
them all pay for
this, Garv-sama,
I promise!




Oh, don't
start CRYING
now...

Sniff
How dare they...
How DARE they
do THIS to your
illustrious
person...



Okay. If we all
calm down and put
our heads together, we
should be able to get this
play back on track.



Gertrude!
Where are you?
Gertrude?

Okay everyone,
let's start behaving
like professional
actors, okay? I want
us to go back to the
part in the scene where
Queen Gertrude says
her first line...



HA-
HAAAAA !!!



Now you see!
NO ONE can oppose
the servants of the mighty
Zoamelgustav without
reaping the fury of
his wrath! Ha!

His dreadful
curse is upon ye,
O ye scoffing
unbeliever!

Yeagh! Get
that...THING out
of my face!

Yeagh! Get
that...THING outta
my face!



You shrill,
brazen
BITCH! How
DARE you mock
the mighty
Garv-sama!



YOUR wife,
you insolent
bounty hunter!

Hey! Whose
wife are you calling
a bitch?



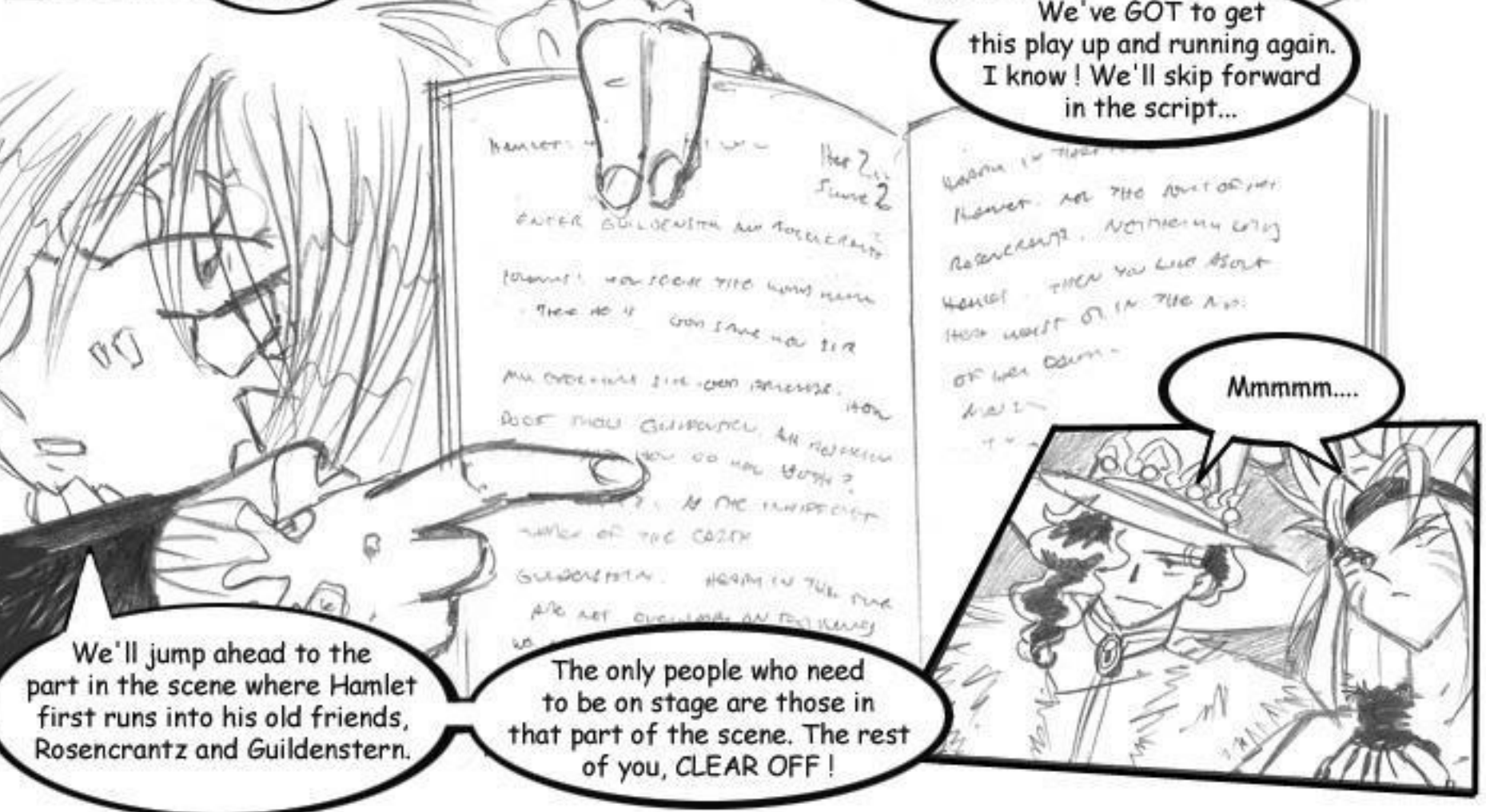
Watch it,
Horn Boy...

YOU watch
it, Freaky
Hat Man...



Gentlemen!
PLEASE! No more
fights!

We've GOT to get
this play up and running again.
I know! We'll skip forward
in the script...



We'll jump ahead to the
part in the scene where Hamlet
first runs into his old friends,
Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern.

The only people who need
to be on stage are those in
that part of the scene. The rest
of you, CLEAR OFF!



Mmmmm....

And so, within a short time, order is restored to the stage and our intrepid little band of performers are are once again able to resume their production...

Filia, our fair narrator, takes to the stage to create the setting for the next part of the scene...



Ahem. We would like to thank our audience for its patience and understanding as we iron out some of our... creative difficulties...

We now continue with Scene Two, at a point in the story where Hamlet meets up with a pair of unexpected visitors...



It all begins one afternoon, as Hamlet is taking his daily stroll through the castle...



...his mind heavy with thoughts of gloom and doom (as usual). But on this day, who should he see coming towards him down a dark corridor but his old school chums, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern...



I'M ROSENCRANTZ !!!



SIGH



Er-HEM...

My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz!

Good lads, how do you both?

As the indifferent children of the Earth.

Happy in that we are not overhappy. On Fortune's cap, we are not the very button.

Neither, my lord.

Faith, her privates we...

Nor the soles of her shoe?


Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?

HEY!
Wait a minute!


"Her PRIVATES we?"
(Y'know, I just realized there may be SOME dialogue in this play that might not be suitable for children like me.)

In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true! She is a strumpet.


YOU are NOT a child...




You're a centuries
old mazoku lord!




And a very
SENSITIVE one at that.
And one who had no idea he'd
be exposed to this kind of smut
when he agreed to sign on
to do this play...




Sigh
What have you,
my good friends...



...deserved at
the hands of
Fortune that she sends
you to prison
thither?




Denmark's a
prison.




Prison,
my lord?

Then is the
world one.




A goodly one, in
which there are many
confines, wards, and
dungeons, Denmark being
one o' th' worst.


We think not
so, my lord.




Why then, 'tis
none to you, for there
is nothing either good or
bad but thinking makes
it so.



To visit you, my
lord, no other
occasion.



To me. It is a
prison. What make
you at Elsinore?



Were you not sent
for? Is it your own
inclining? Is it a free
visitation? Come, come,
deal justly with me.



Hamlet's tone and attitude towards his old friends suddenly changes, as he begins to suspect the true reason behind their visit. He correctly surmises that his parents may have summoned them to Elsinore in order to spy on him.

You were sent for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to color.



To what end, my lord?

I will tell you why...I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises,



...this majestic roof, fretted with golden fire--why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.

Sigh This... is SO boring. Remind me, at what point do the flowery speeches end and the mindless, bloody violence begins?



and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory.



Keep your tights on, kid. It ain't for a while yet. As far as flowery speeches go, this Hamlet guy is just warming up...

What a piece of work is a man...



...how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties,

in form and moving how express and admirable!

In action, how
like an angel...

In apprehension,
how like a god.

The beauty of
the world, the paragon
of animals !

And yet, to
me, what is this
quintessence
of dust ?

GRR ! YOU
LITTLE HELLMONKEY !
I WILL GET YOU BACK FOR
DOING THIS TO ME !
I MEAN IT !

THAT'S
IT ! I am
outta here ! But
don't think this
is the last you'll
be hearing from me
tonight, half-pint !
I'll find SOME
way to get my
revenge on
you...

Temper,
temper, G-Man.
Tell you what.
You behave
yourself now and
when this is all
over, I'll get you
a nice, shiny new
urn to live in.
Whattaya
say ?

Dust, (or
in YOUR case,
Rosencrantz,
ASH...)



Garv!
I mean -
Rosencrantz!

COME
BACK!!

Where are
you going?



Hey, don't
sweat it, Director Man...
I can handle both HIS
part AND mine...

Ahem...

To think, my
lord, if you delight not
in man, what Lenten
entertainment the
players shall receive
from you.

We coted them on
the way and hither
they are coming to
offer you service.



Uh...
Hello? Hamlet?
You hear what
I said?

The players
are coming...

Players?
Sigh. What
players?



You know...
Those you
were wont to
take such
delight in,
the
tragedians
of the
city?


The PLAYERS!
Oh my God!

I was
supposed to
check and see
if they had
arrived at the
theater!


So sayeth
the SCRIPT,
m'lord...

With all
the disasters
that have been
happening on-
stage lately, I
totally forgot
about them!


I hope they
have... And I hope
they're in their cos-
tumes standing where
they're supposed
to be...



Is it time
for us to go
out on stage
yet?



Not yet. We
wait until we hear
the trumpets, THEN
we go out... I
think...




Rosencran--I mean,
Guildenstern tells Hamlet about
a band of travelling actors he had
come upon while on his journey to
Elsinore. At his request, the players
have agreed to follow him to the
castle where they have now
just arrived...




So....
Director
Man...




Who'd
you get to
be the
players?
Anyone I'd
know?




They're a
band of...experienced
performers. Favorites
of Prince Phil...




From that
expression on your
face, it looks like you
expect to have some
trouble with them.




Oooh. I'm
sure the odds of THAT
happening are REAL
good...




Y'know something,
kid? Even if you WEREN'T
a dark lord, you'd still
give me the chills....



No. There
shouldn't be any
trouble. Not if they
play their parts the
way I told them
to...



The travelling
players now enter
the castle, amid a
loud flourish of
trumpets.



Sigh
Okay...
Bring it
on...



That's it!
That's our cue!
Time to move
out!



Ahhh...



I have GOT
to have a word with
those trumpet
players...

Evil-doers
of the world,
BEWARE !!



Your days
are numbered! The
Hour of JUSTICE
is at hand !!



And we, the
agents of eternal,
burning JUSTICE
will show you no
mercy!



Behold!
We are here, to
cast light upon the
path of righteous-
ness!



Who the
HELL are
THEY?

Oh no...



Hi there,
folks! We're the
Peacemen Players!
Denmark's first All-
JUSTICE theater
troupe!

No kidding.
You look more like
Denmark's
OLDEST theater
troupe...

SIGH

«Hi there,
sonny ! We're here !
What did you think of
our big entrance ?»

Hiya folks !

Gentlemen,
you are welcome
to Elsinore...

No autographs
until after the play
is over, okay
kids ?

«Even if you ARE
wearing the wrong kind
of costumes... You were all
supposed to be dressed up as
medieval Danish actors...»

What's that,
Sonny ? I can't
hear you. Speak
up a bit....

I SAID,
YOU'RE
WEARING THE
WRONG
COSTUMES !!
YOU'RE ALL
SUPPOSED TO
BE DRESSED
LIKE MEDIEVAL
ACTORS !!!

Oh well,
we'll have that fixed
in a jiffy once we've
finished our grand, Super-
Chango, Transformation
Sequence !

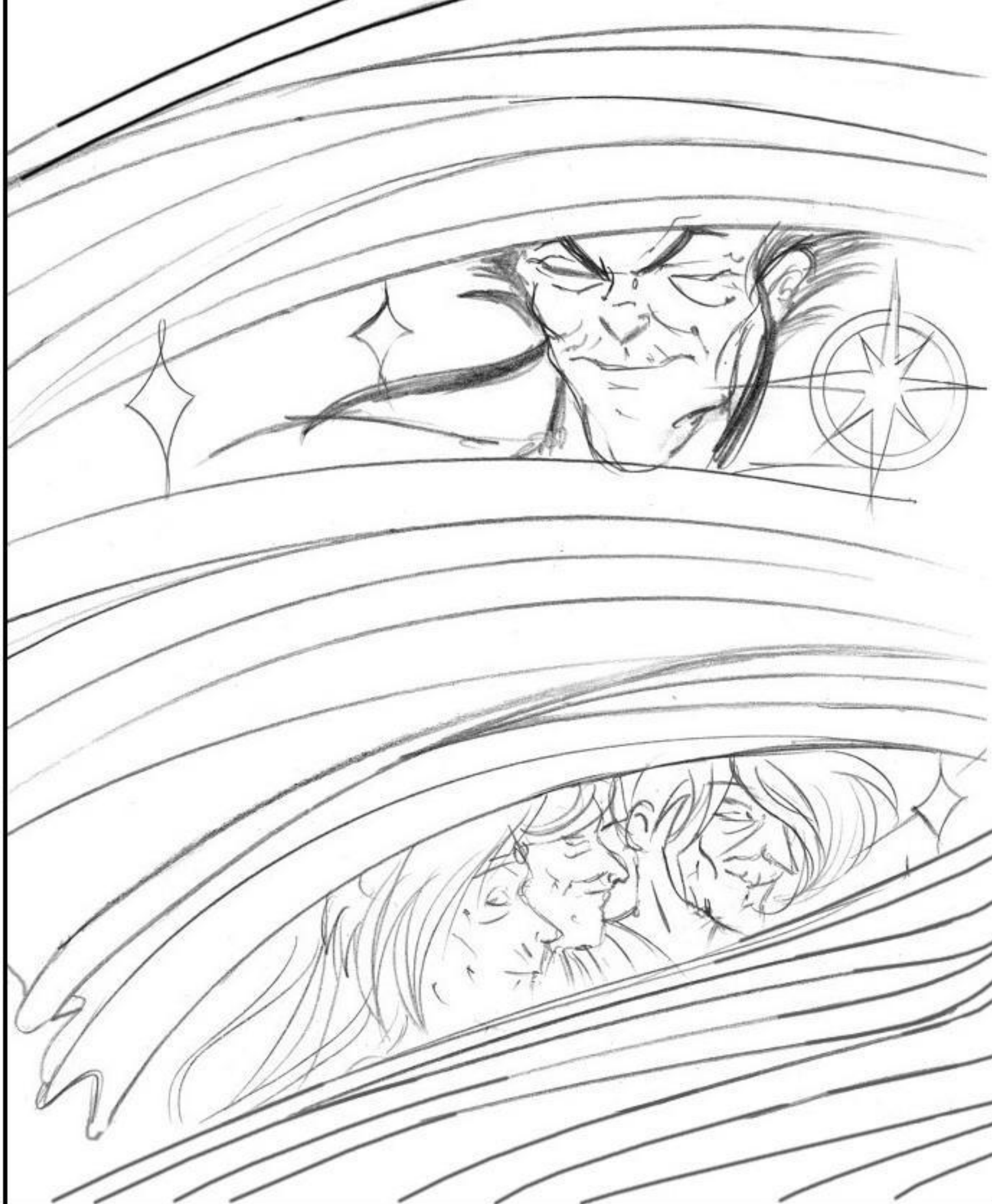
ALLRIGHT
EVERYBODY !
It's MORPHING
TI-- (whoops,
copyright) -- IT'S
SUPER-CHANGO
TIME !!

Your
grand wha-zah?

HAI !!

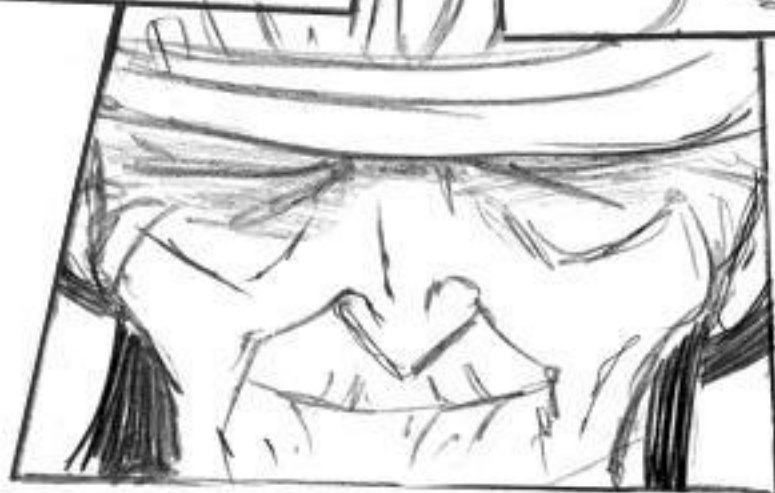


WOOSH!!

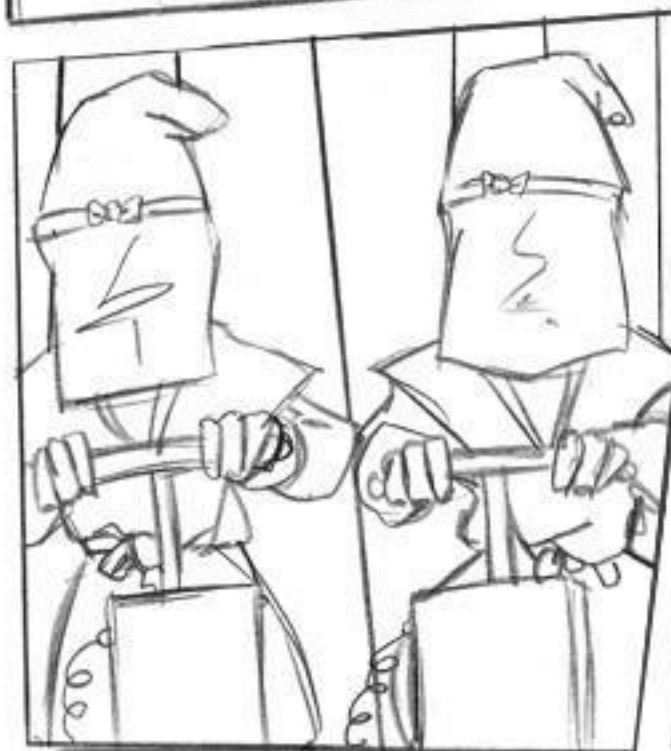



RUSTLE

RUSTLE




Peacemen
Players
Shakespearean
Super-Chango
Sequence
COMPLETE!








Oh William...
A sentai transformation
sequence in a
Shakespearean play...
SIGH




Welllll
cheer up....
Coulda been
worse...




And just
HOW, Demon Seed,
could it have been
any WORSE?



Welllll, it
coulda been one of
those mildly titillating,
NUDE Sailor Moon-type
sentai transformation
sequences...



.....
.....That.....is true.....
.....



Glad you
guys could
make it...



**GENTLEMEN, You
are MOST
WELCOME !!!**

Hey, Your
Highness! Thanks for
lettin' us in on this
play gig. We sure do
appreciate it!

Well, it's
the least I can do
for fellow warriors
of Justice!

What did you
think of our latest
special effects,
Prince?

Excellent!
You'll have to teach
me how to do that
sometime...

But of course!
You know, in this day
and age, acrobatics and
amateur dramatics will
only take you so far as a
warrior of Justice...

...but if you've
got some show-stopping
special effects in your
repertoire, then you have
a potent weapon in your
arsenal of--

Polonius....
Oh, Polonius....

.....
POLONIUS!

POLONIUS !!

If I might have a word
with the players....

(You and the "Geezers of Justice"
can talk shop later..)

Ahem....

You are welcome
masters, welcome all--
I am glad to see thee
well...

Welcome, good
friends...

What, my young
lady and mistress! By'r Lady,
your ladyship is nearer to
heaven than when I saw you
last by the altitude of a
chopine. Pray God your

voice, like a piece of
uncurrent gold, be not
cracked within the
ring.

Oh my....

HEE HEE
HEE HEE HEE

Good my lord,
will you see the players
well bestowed?

Follow him,
friends. We'll hear a
play tomorrow.

Hold it,
Player One...

YOU stay
here...

Somewhere in
the depths of Hamlet's
mind, a plan is brewing.
A plan by which he hopes to
expose his uncle's treachery.
At this time, the prince pulls
the leader of the players
aside to have a private
word with him.

Dost thou hear me,
old friend? Can you play
"The Murder of Gonzago?"

YAWN.

Say, "Ay,
my lord..."

Uh... Ay,
my lord...

We'll ha't tomorrow
night. You could, for a
need, study a speech of
some dozen or sixteen
lines, which I would set
down and insert in't,
could you not?

Uhhh....

Uhhh...



Say, "Ay, my lord..."

Ay, my lord...



Very well. Follow Polonius.

You don't say "Ay, my lord," THIS time, you just leave!

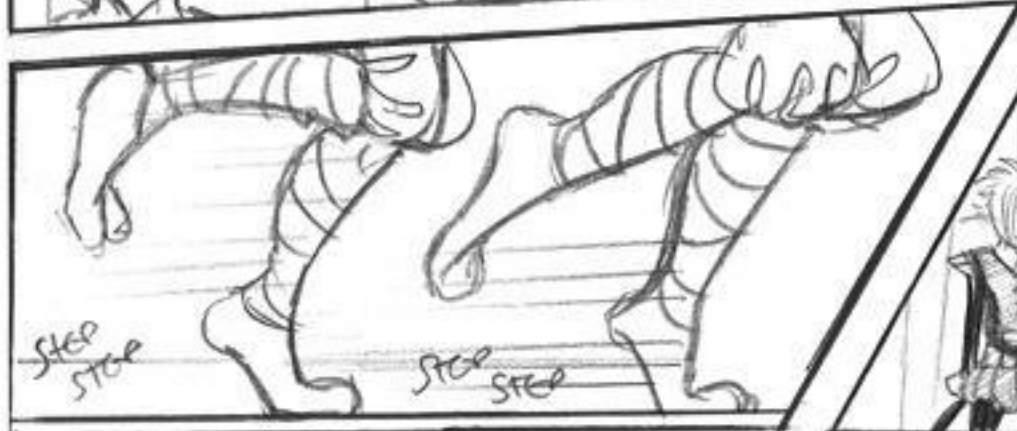
Ay, my lord...

A-Ay, my lord !!



Very well ! I shall take my leave ! But I and the other Peacemen Players will soon be back, and in the name of Justice, we'll give such a performance, that the forces of evil shall run screaming in terror !

FAREWELL !!



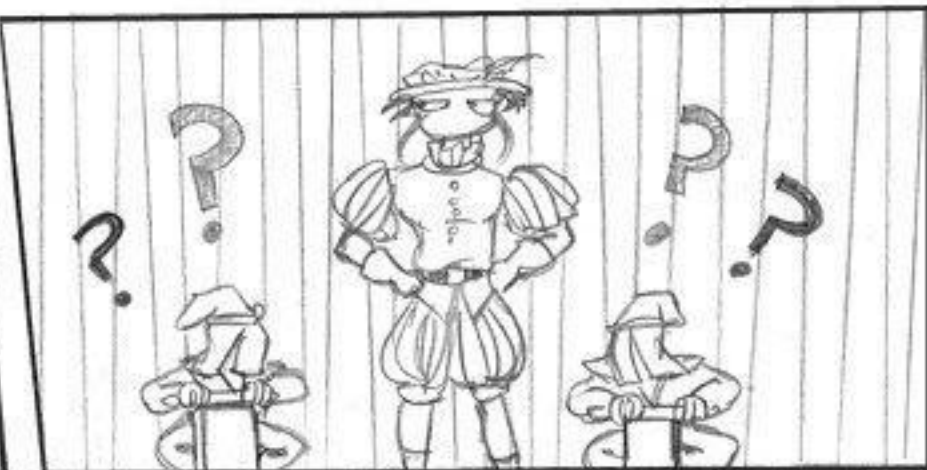
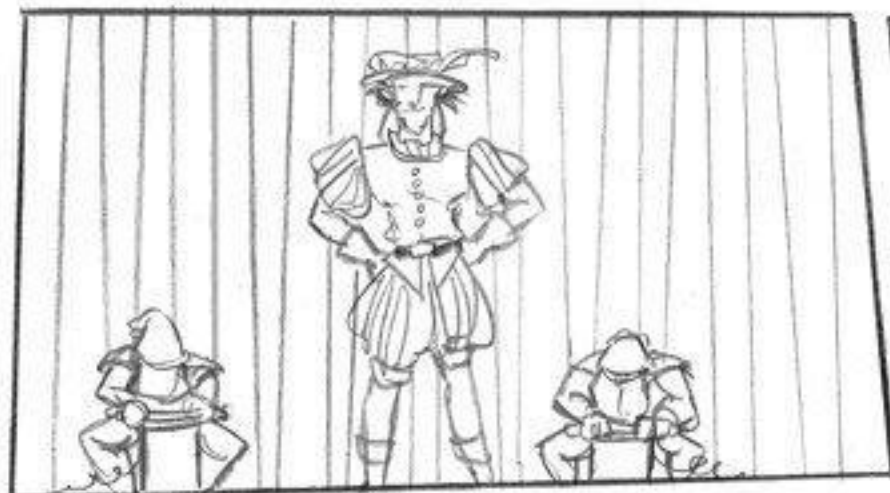
step
step

step
step



K
S
H
H
K!

K
S
H
H
HK!





Did you hear
me? I said clear off!
NOW !!!



O, what a
rogue and peasant
slave am I...

Sheesh. He's
1/3 Golem, 1/3
Demon, and 1/3
CRABASS....

You sure
he's only
a THIRD?

O,
vengeance!

Upon finding
himself alone once
more, Hamlet ponders
over his next move...

Why, what an
ass am I! This is most
brave, that I, the son
of a dear father
murdered...

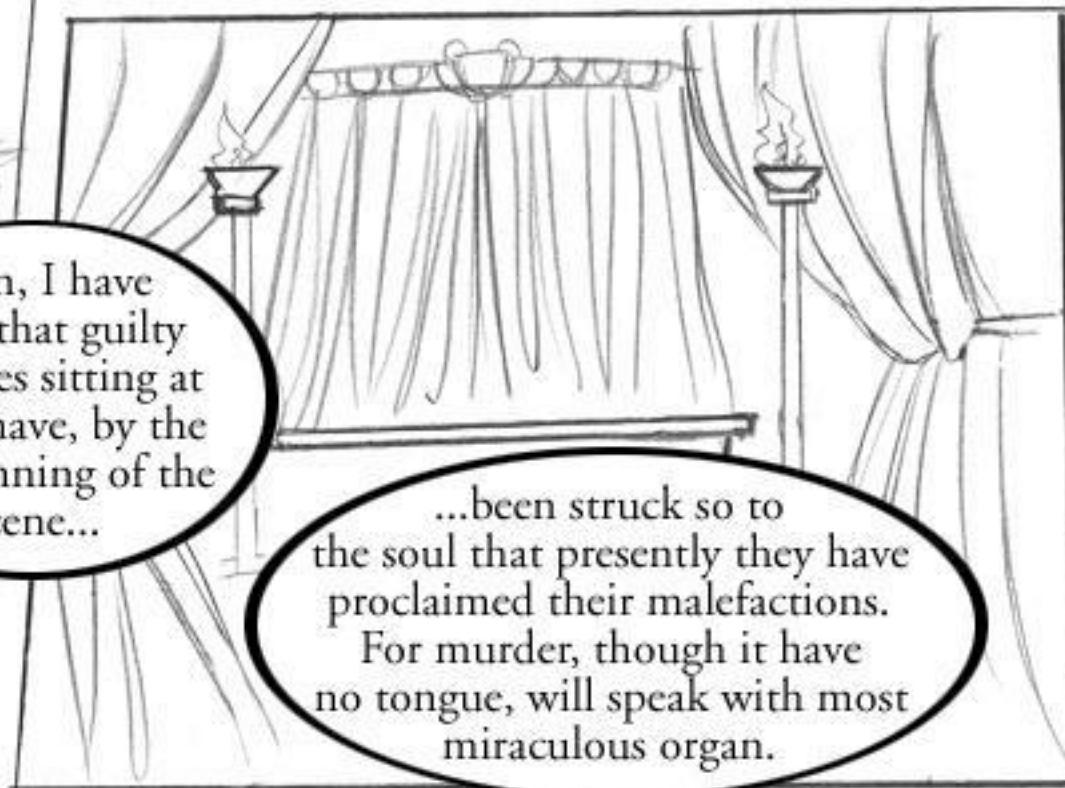
...prompted to my
revenge by heaven and
hell, must, like a whore,
unpack my heart with
words and fall a-cursing
like a very drab.

A scullion!
Fie upon 't!
Foh!
About, my
brains!



Hum, I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play have, by the very cunning of the scene...

...been struck so to the soul that presently they have proclaimed their malefactions. For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ.



I'll have these players play something like the murder of my father before mine uncle.

I'll observe his looks; I'll tent him to the quick.

If he do blench, I know my course...



The spirit that
I have seen may be
a devil, and the devil
hath power t' assume
a pleasing shape;



Yea, and perhaps, out of my
weakness and melancholy, as he
is very potent with such spirits,
abuses me to damn me.

I'll have
grounds
more relative
than this....



The play's
the thing...
Wherein, I'll
catch the
conscience
of the
King...



FOOM!

WHAT
the ?..



Uh...
What'd you
think of that,
sir? It sure
made your
speech more
dramatic,
didn't it?

Master Dai
fired us, so we were
wondering if you wouldn't
mind us working for YOU
from now on....

TWITCH
TWITCH

Dammit! What do you mean
by coming in here and ruining my closing
soliloquy? This is supposed to be a serious
Shakespearean drama! If I had wanted
cheesy special effects, I'd have staged
an Andrew Lloyd Webber
musical!

CHUNK !!

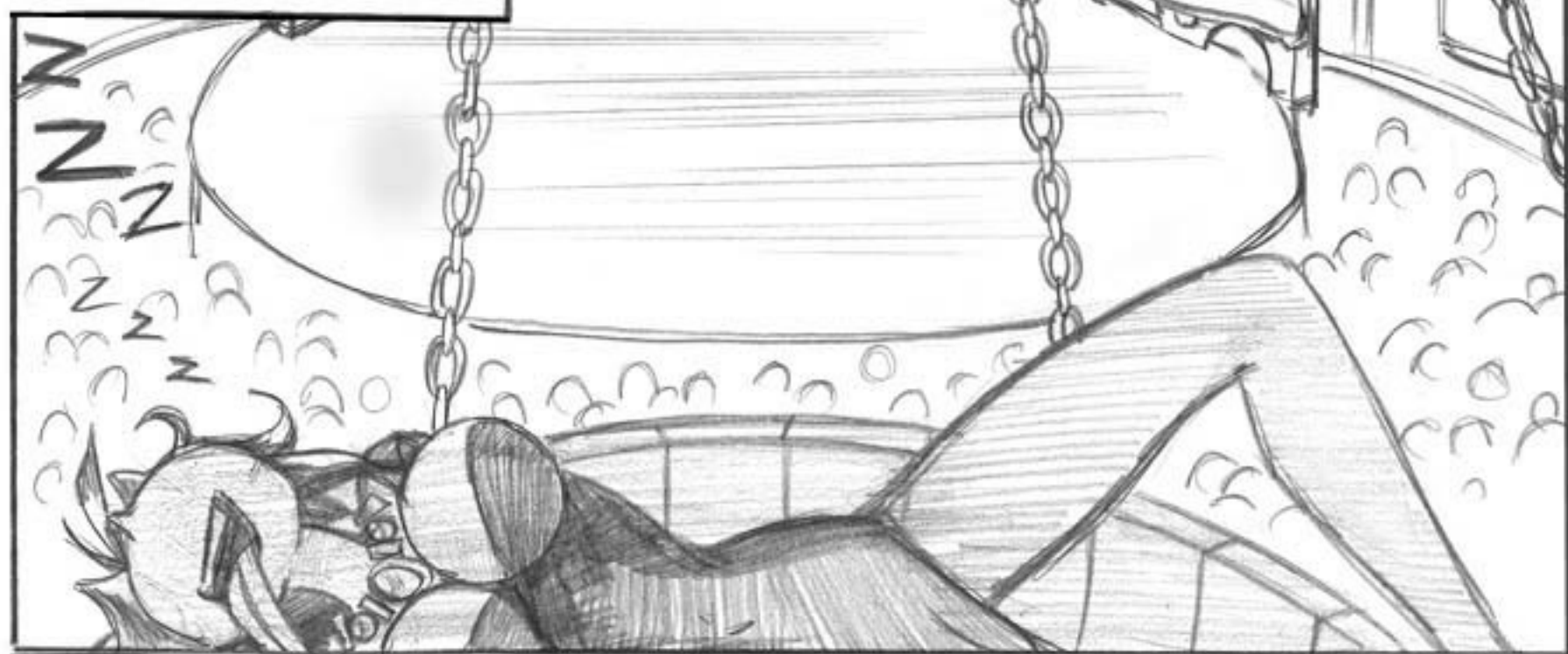
So, that's a
NO, right?

And so, Prince Hamlet puts his plan into motion,
certain that it will soon reveal to him the truth about
whether his uncle is a murderer. If such should
prove to be the case, Hamlet knows the task that
then awaits him will not be an easy or a pleasant one.
But for now, all the prince can do is watch...plan....
and pray.....

Stay tuned for Act Three

And so, the second act of our play comes to an end, and the stage falls silent ...

Behind the scenes, however....



Are you sure you want to do this, Miss Lina? I mean, I think I'll have enough time to do it if I hurry out there and--

Well, okay. But you're sure you know what to do..

SURE! Go out into the audience, mingle a little... do a few interviews... kill some time... Leave it to me!

No no. YOU stay here. I know how badly Zel wants to go over the script with you. I've got my part down pretty well. He won't mind if I'm not at the cast meeting...

Come on, Gourry! Let's go!

Wh-where we going?

Allright then. Thanks, Miss Lina, and good luck out there!

You and me are going to do the "Interview with the Audience" segment of the intermission. Now!



Sigh I hope Miss Lina and Mr. Gourry Don't run into any problems out there...

Go AWAY, I said! Stop following me!!



Ha haa! We're not so big and scary now, ARE we, Mr. Dragon Man!

Sigh....

Neener, neener, NEENER, you don't have a wein-

AHEM!!!

Allright, everyone! It's time to go over the script for Act 3! We're not gonna have any more SURPRISES when we take to the stage again...

Did you hear me, you pea-brained princess? I said BEAT IT! SHOO! GET LOST!!!

At this very moment, elsewhere in the theater...



Hi, Everybody! Lina Inverse, world-famous, bandit-killing heroine here, on behalf of the Seyruun Ministry of Culture. It's now MY turn to do some visiting with tonight's audience!



Ch' YEAH, RIGHT....

And I'M Sailor Moon...

Uhhhh, Lina?



...If we're supposed to be interviewing the audience, then what are we doing standing in the line to the concession stand?

Look, numbskull, we don't actually have to be IN the theater area to do interviews with the audience.... THIS place is as good as any...

And if we play our cards right, we can use this whole "interview with the audience" bit to hustle our way to the front of the snack line...

Oh-mpf!



L-Sama only knows how much longer this play is going to last. It could be HOURS before we get our hands on that post-Opening Night Cast Party Buffet that Stone Boy promised us...



Miss Lina!
Mr. Gourry!

SO then, it's time to pick our first interviewee. Whom shall it be?







Well, Miwan,
it was nice chatting
with you, but we have to go
interview that guy Gourry
wanted to talk to...



Okay, Gourry.
it's time to go...

I'm sure he'll
be happy to know
YOU'RE here...

We'll tell
Zel we ran into
you...

GACK!



Uh, Lina...
Who is this guy
we're going to
interview that I
wanted to talk
to?

Um... Well...
It was....

THIS
guy!



Good evening,
sir. Hope we're not
bothering you, but my
friend and I were
wondering...

...if you'd be
so kind as to let
us interview you
for...



AUUUGGHH!!!

LALA !

It's you ! My beloved ! It's been SO LONG since I've seen your beautiful face !!!

VOLUN !!!
Uh...Wh-wh-what are YOU doing here ?



Oh, I just decided to come to the theatre tonight, as a way to pass the long, lonely evening....

Since you left me, my life has been filled with long, lonely evenings...



Well, I'm real sorry to hear about that, but you know what they say, better to have loved and lost...

Eep.



However, if you ever change your mind and decide to take me back, I'd be willing to work things out with you. What we had between us was SO beautiful. Let's not just throw it away...

Sigh
If we run into just ONE more annoying pers--



Whaddaya MEAN by "what we had between us ?" GACK ! Lina ! HELLLL !

I know. And I've come to accept the fact that our time together was destined to last only a short while. I'm over my pain now. And I'm ready to go on with my life...

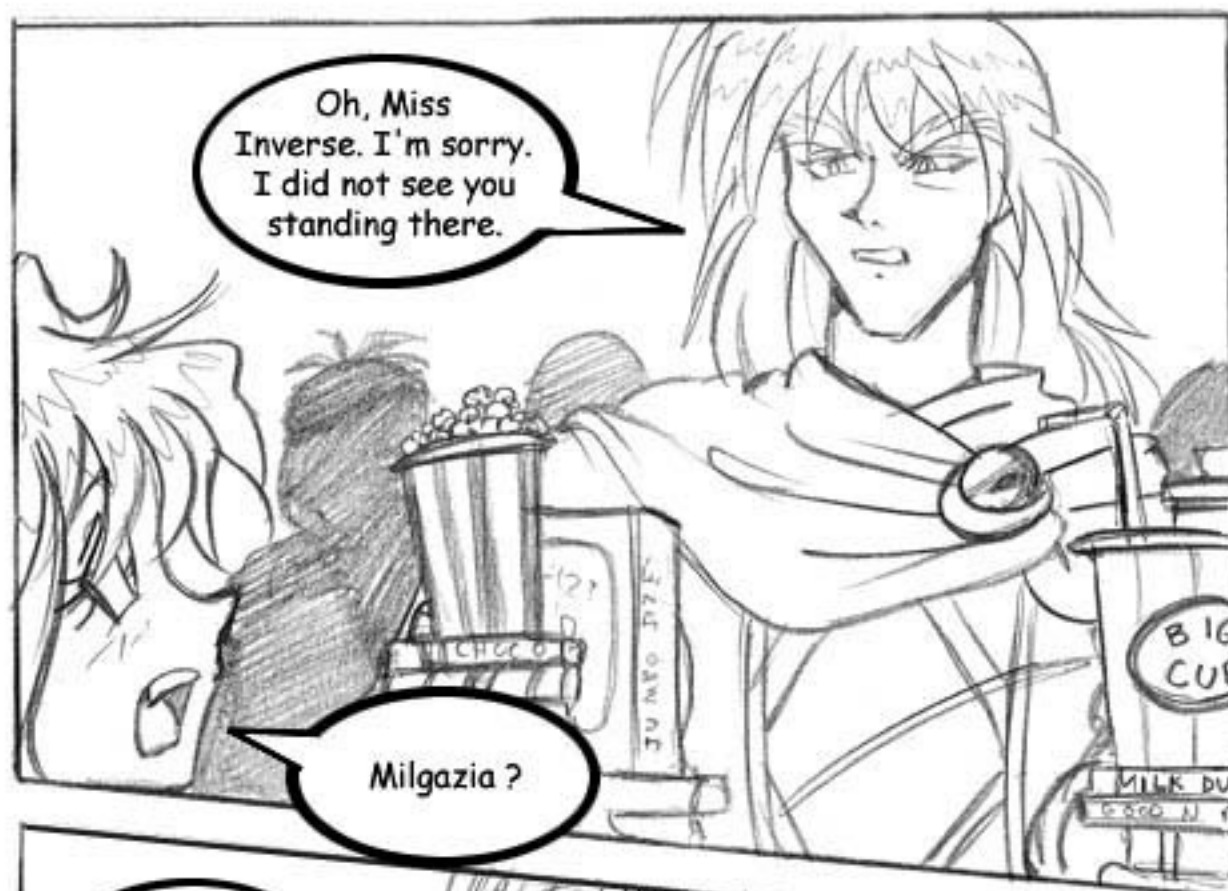


OOP !!

BUMP !!



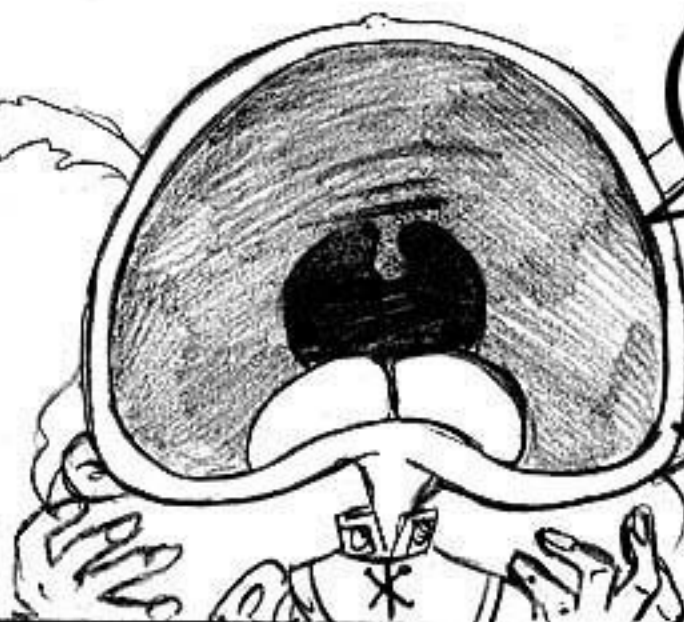
Hey ! Watch it you big, clumsy--



NOOOOOOOO!!!!

Oh, cruel fate! Why?

WHY?



Sniff I'm hungry... SOOO hungry. Why did this have to happen?

And HOW could this happen to someone as powerful and as beautiful as me?
Sniffle....

Just kidding...



They've got plenty of snacks left at the concession stand. Really...









Hey, what's that
girl up to ?

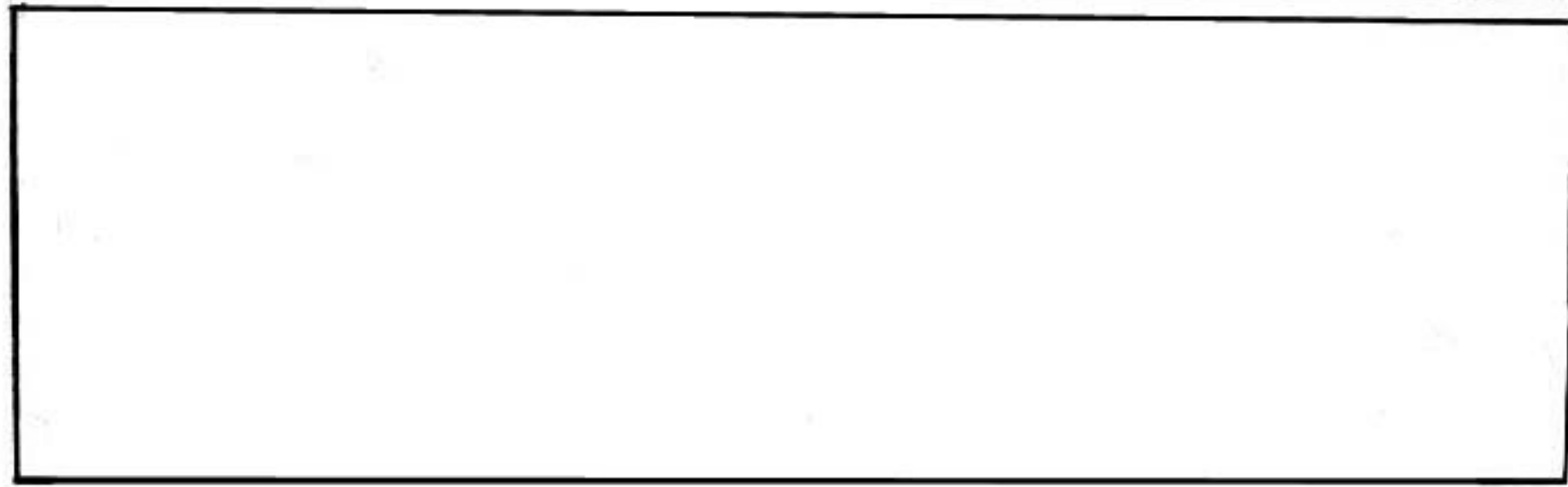
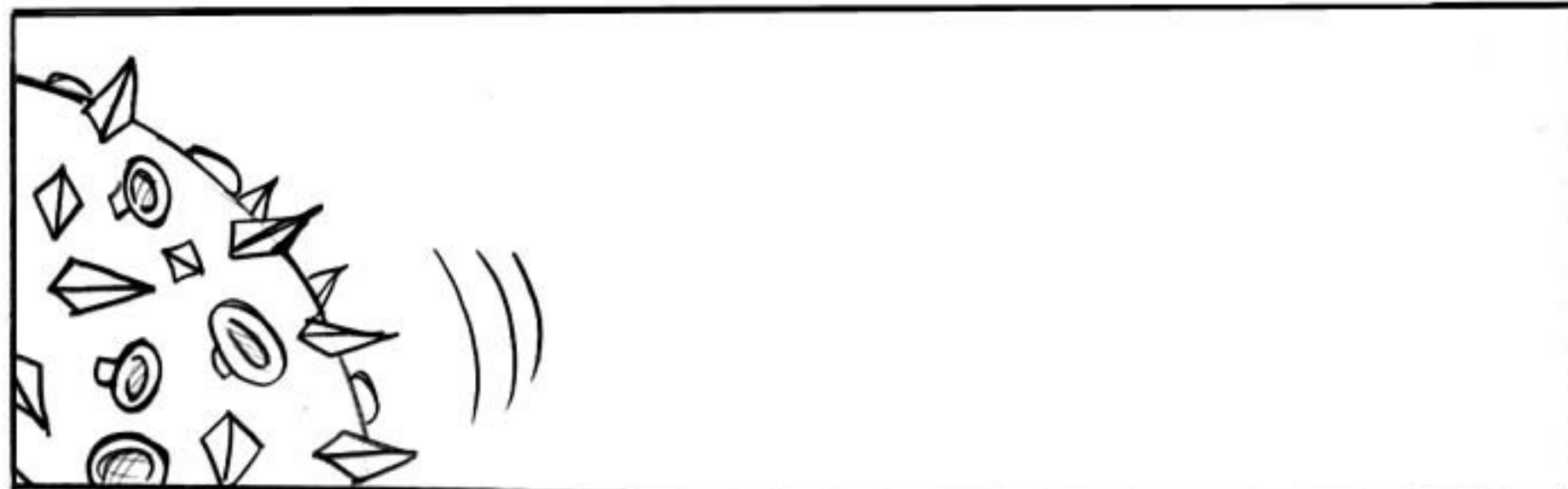
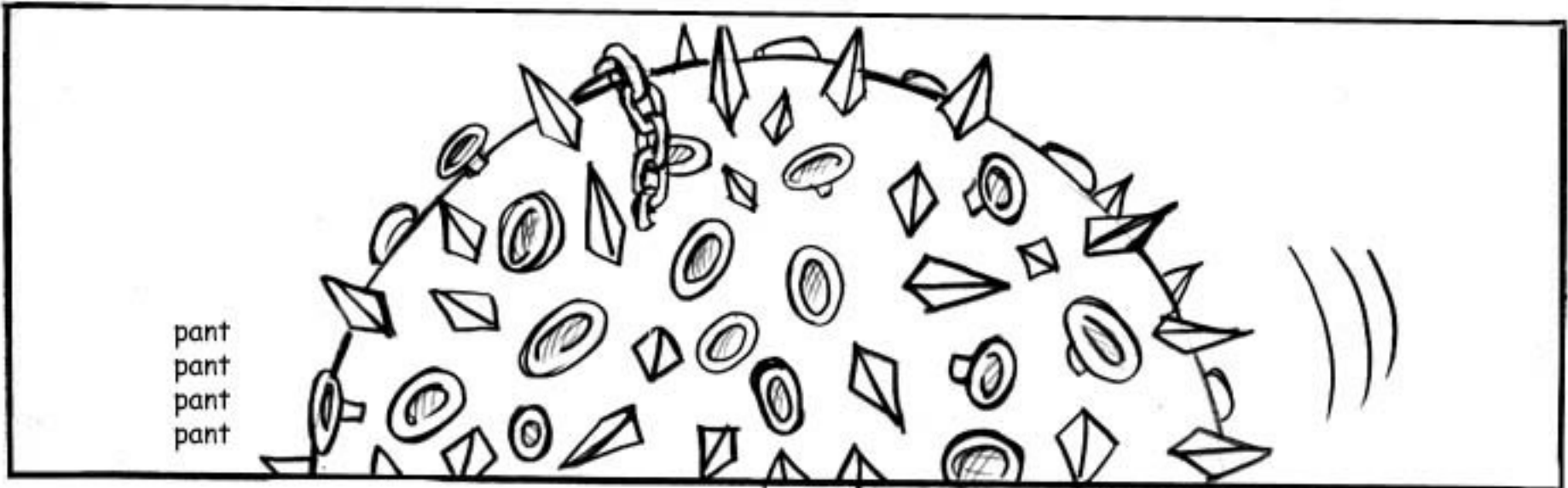
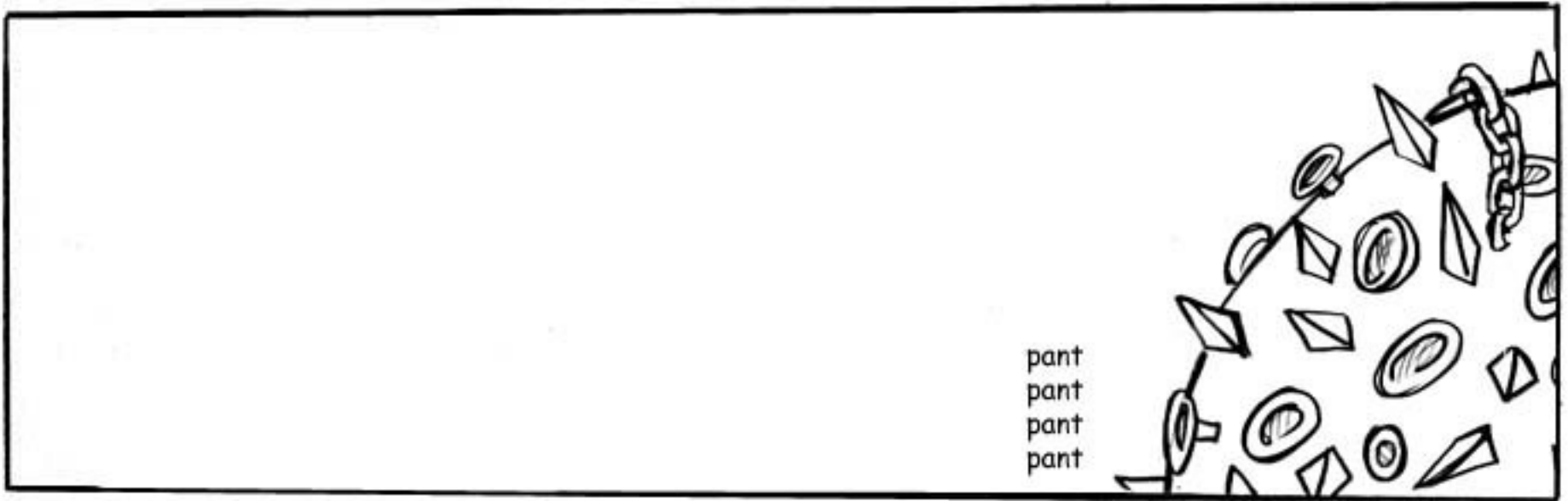
She must be crazy !

HEY !!

WATCH OUT !

AHHHHH !!!!

R-R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-P !!!!



KRASSSHHH



WIPE
WIPE

Linaaa !

Hey!
LINAAA !!!



LINAAAAAAA !!



VIPE !!

LALA ! Oh,
LAALAAAAAAA !!!



Where ARE
you, my darling ?
Where did you go ?
I've got a nice pair of
seats for us up in the
balcony where it's dark
and where we can be
alone and do....
ANYTHING we
waaaaant !



I gotta find
Lina somehow ! But if that
Volun guy finds me
first....

...I suppose I
could do what any great
warrior would do and fall
on my sword...



Maybe I can get Lina's attention safely if I whisper really LOUD.



(*Inhale*) LIIIIIIINN--ah.



Just what do you think you're doing here, Jelly-Fish Brain? We have to get to the snack line! We only have a few minutes left!

Well, okay, but aren't we going to be doing at least ONE interview with the audience?



Sigh
....FINE.....



Excuse me, miss...



Hi! We're with the Seyruun Ministry of Culture. Might we have a word with you?

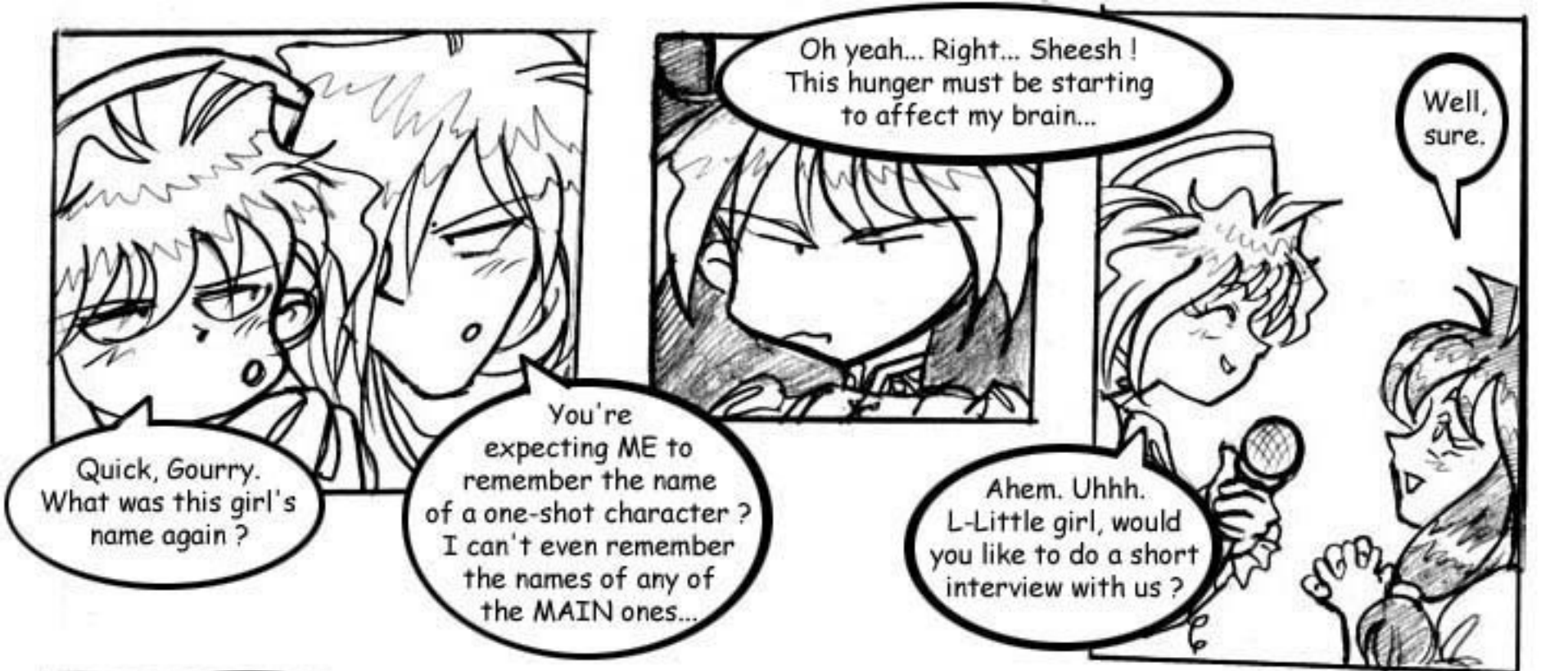


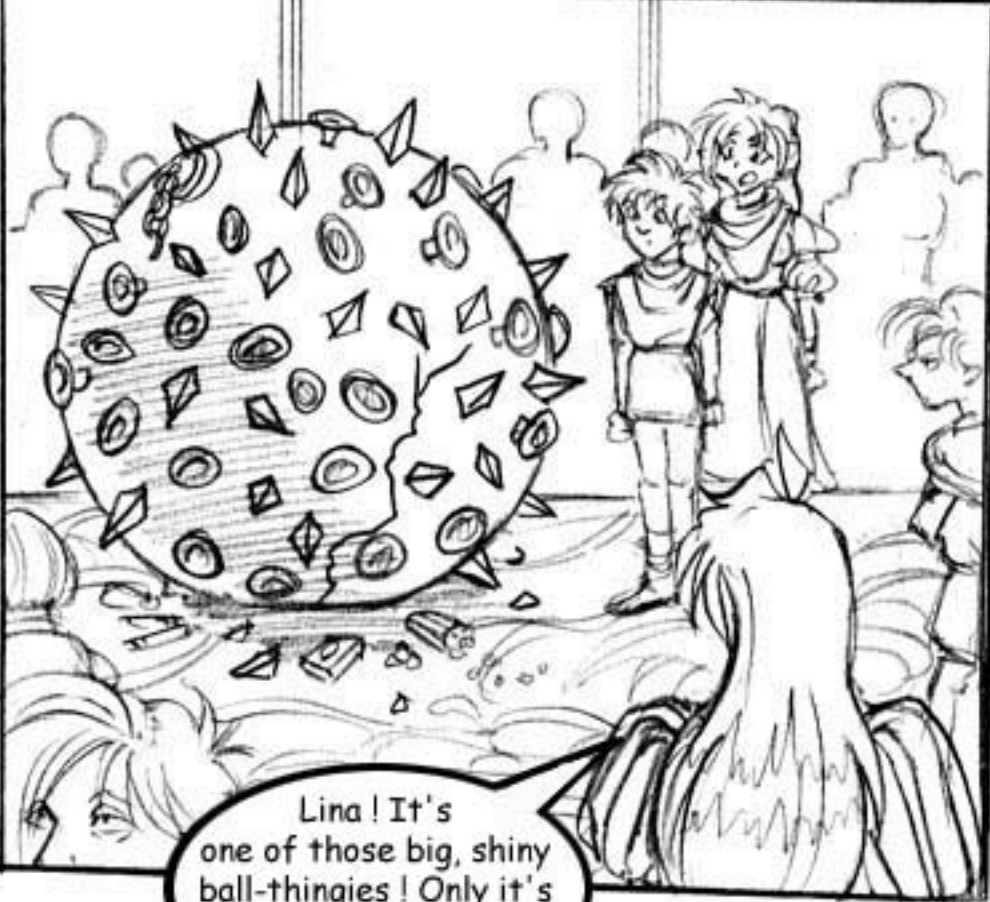
Oh, Miss Lina. Mr. Gourry....

Uh, you KNOW us, little girl?

Sure I do. I remember when you came to my village and helped me. You and that nice lady with the pretty tail...

Oh, NOW I remember you! You were that girl with all the flowers who kept harping on about how a big hero was going to come and save your village...





Lina! It's one of those big, shiny ball-thingies! Only it's not hanging from the ceiling...



...And it isn't shiny...

Sigh Note to myself... There are many humans in this world who are capable of appreciating the subtlety and deadpan nature of Dragon Humor.

Lina Inverse is NOT one of them...



Eep!

Come on, Gourry...

And it's TALKING...

Stay focused. Just a little further now...



Excuse us... Make way...



Extremely beautiful, powerful and hungry sorceress coming through...

Move it or lose it...

Hello ! We're with the
Seyruun Ministry of Culture !
We're here to do a special
Intermission Interview Session
with you good folks here at the
concession stand....

Uwaaah!

...After which
we'd like to
order fifteen of
everything you
have in stock
back there
and a keg of
root beer...

So then,
why don't you
tell us what
you think of...

Ah.....ah.....AHHHHHHHHH !!!!



Now that I think of it, being a warrior of light, (such as I am,) it probably wouldn't be right of me to let you and Lina walk away unpunished after watching the way you both just cut ahead in line. But I'll be willing to do so if you turn around and leave right now...

Well, thank you. That's very kind of you.

I'm going now...

Hold it.

GULPI

Here. Take these. One of them is for you and the other is for Lina.

POCKY !
GEE ! THANKS !!

Well, I thought I couldn't have you walking away thinking I was a monster...

Wow ! Lina isn't going to believe me when I tell her you just gave these to us !

Hee hee. What a nice gal. I can't understand why Lina is always so afraid of her...

I'm NOT just giving them to you. I'm SELLING them to you.

And for the low, low price of only 3000 Gold Pieces. Payable immediately.

Ah-HA!
NOW I understand why....

**Meanwhile, backstage,
the cast meeting is
drawing to a close...**



Okay. So to
repeat what I
just outlined...

Certain
scenes will
have to be
omitted for
time
constraints.
And Hamlet's
"To be or not
to be" soliloquy
will be moved to
a point further
along in the
act...

...after his
confrontation with
Ophelia. This will be
done to heighten the
sense of dramatic
tension...

...Talking as if
he knew anything
at all about how
to direct a
play...

Ye gods...
Just listen to him...

And what
makes him think
HE'S qualified to
play the role of a
tragic figure like
Hamlet? When has
he ever had any
real-life experience
dealing with
tragedy?

I mean,
it's not like HE'S
ever seen HIS entire race
slaughtered in a war... And
what makes him think he's
such a good actor? He's
never even been in--

...just
because he gave
you the role of
the Gravedigger...

I mean,
that's not something
worth getting all bent
out of shape over,
is it?

No...
But I had thought
that someone of my
talent and experi-
ence would get a
better part...

Sheesh, Valgarv...
Don't tell me you're STILL
pissed off at our illustrious
director...



After all, I used to be the president of the Ancient Dragons Drama Club. I know every one of Shakespeare's plays by heart. And here I am, getting cast as the "Grave-digger."

A lowly, class-less prull with barely any stage time...

Gee. I can't imagine why Zel didn't give you a better part... He must be jealous of your talent...



...or maybe he just has a thing against whiny, temperamental, hard-to-work-with actor types...



WHY DON'T YOU SHRIVEL UP AND DIE, YOU SMIRKING, RUBBER-FACED FRUITCAKE !!!!

Oh well. That's backstage politics for you... Some are winners and some are losers. But I should think you'd be USED to losing, eh, Val?



Why no, there isn't, Mr. Director. I can assure you that I am, at all times, maintaining a level of composure and professionalism that is the hallmark of a true actor.



Ahem. Valgarv? Is there a problem?

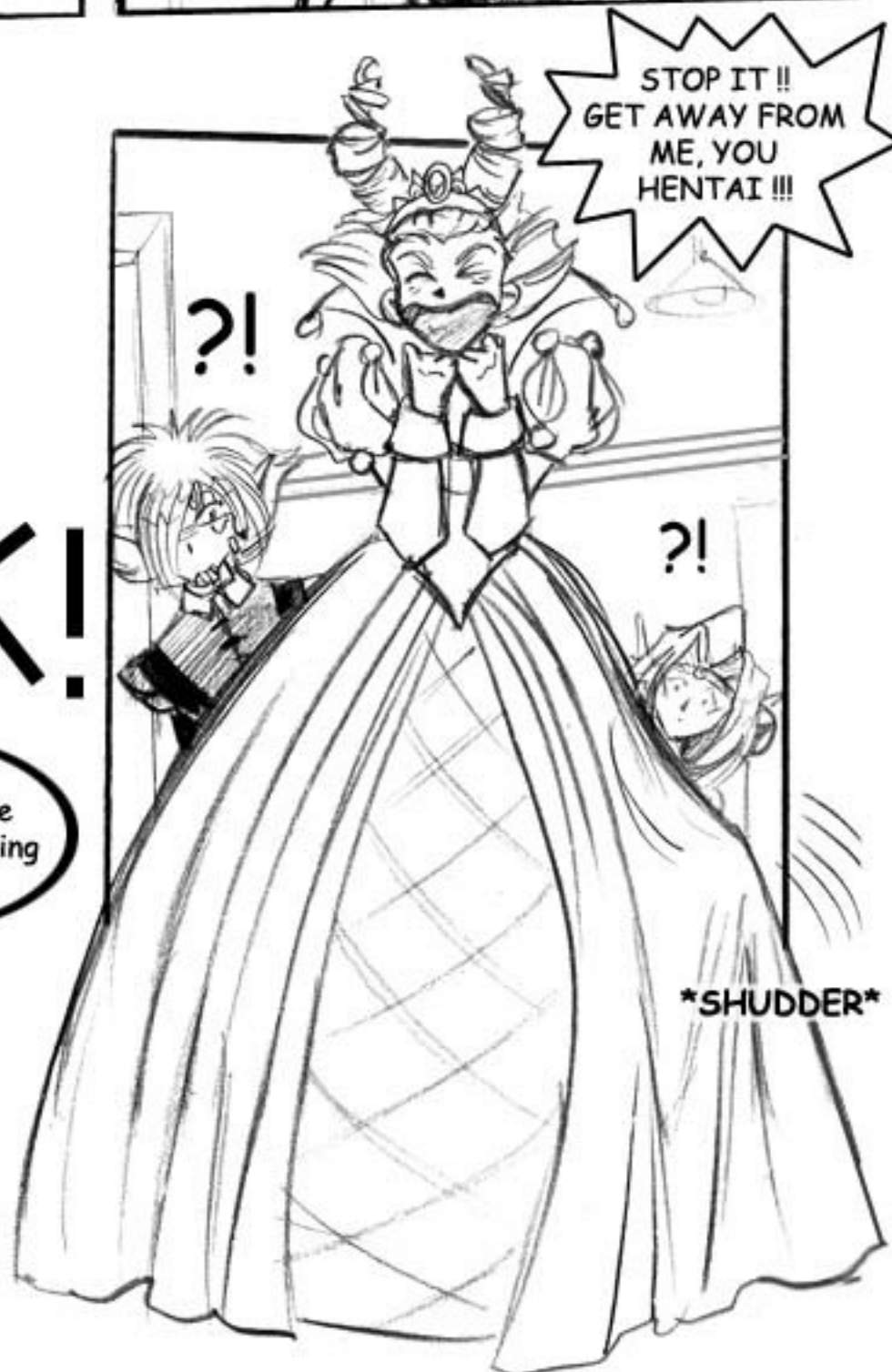
HEEEEEEE.....

Well that's good to hear. So. Why don't you go put on your costume now and get ready for your entrance?



Yes, sir. Thank you for reminding me. What ever would I do without you, Director Man?





Get off! Get off!
Get OFF!!!!

Sigh
Okay. Amelia,
I want to talk
to you about
that scene coming
up where Hamlet
confronts Ophelia,--
the "nunnery"
scene...

Now it will be
your most difficult
scene, and I want to
make sure you're
completely comfort-
able with how I
staged it...

AYIEEEEEEEEEEE

Oh yes.
I'm fine with it.
I know what I
have to do...and what
I have to let
YOU do...

GET OFF!!!

KICK!!!

Yes, well... I
just want to assure
you that I'm going to
go as easy on you as
I possibly can...

Yes....
well, I'm
thinking of
making a
slight change
in the scene by
adding....a...

kiss between
Hamlet and
Ophelia,

I know
you will. It'll
be like the way
you and I
rehearsed it
earlier...

A....A....
KISS?

Now it's nothing
to get excited about...

It's
purely an
artistic
decision...

And it's something I had planned on doing all along, but I didn't want to tell you about it until now because I was unsure of how you would react...Or if you would be...overly excited--

EEEEEEK !!!!
HENTAI !!!!

DAAHHH !!!!

Okay okay okay ! We won't do the kiss ! Forget I even mentioned it ! Please please PLEASE don't tell your father that I brought it up !!

No, Mr. Zeldadis... I'm perfectly alright with the idea of kissing you...

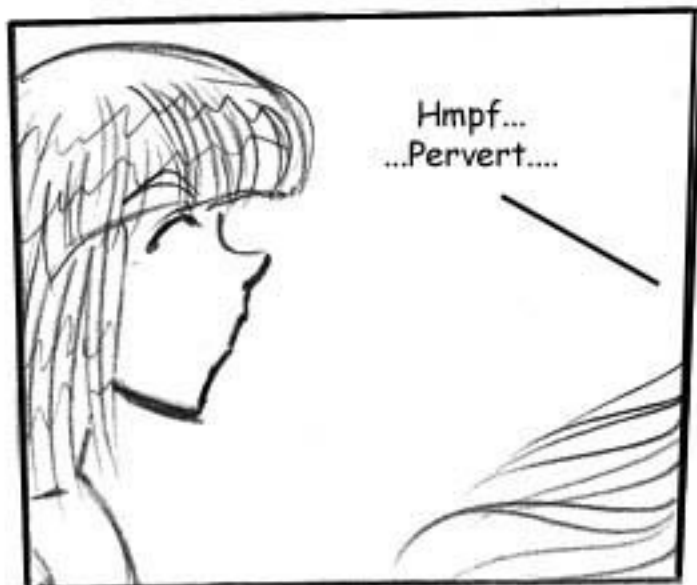
But I'm NOT perfectly alright with what Miss Lina is doing...

Miss Lina !
GET OFF !!!

KICK !!

SHIVER

WHAM!!





Hmm. I must come up with a really creative and original way of annoying that woman before the night is over...

SIGH

Hmpf. They think they can humiliate me this way, do they?

Well, I'll show them all that it isn't wise to show disrespect to an Ancient Dragon!

And as for that so-called "director," I'll--

CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

CRUNCH!

MMMMM

CRACKLE !!

--soon...
...show...
...him--

Ahem. Excuse me. I am TRYING to have a dramatic interlude, and that's a terribly difficult thing to do with you crunching loudly and raining crumbs all over me.

Waff a dramaffic iferluff?

It's...
Oh,
Never mind...

Hmpf!
Even the Brainless Boy Wonder gets a better part than I do...
grumble

So...
hungry....

GRUMBLE !!!

Whoa. That sounds like Lina's stomach...





Uh-oh. I guess
I was SO hungry, I
accidentally ate
BOTH boxes...



You... ate...
MY...Pocky ?



N-now,
take it easy, Lina !
There's no reason to
get upset ! All I did was
eat a little Pocky ! It
wasn't like I did
something seriously
bad, I-I-like make a
thoughtless comment
about the size of
your breasts !

EEEEEP !!



...which, by the
way, seem much
smaller than usual
tonight. Did you
strap them down to
flatten them or
anything ?

At that precise moment,
not far away...

Yes, Mr. Zelgadis.
I'm all ready for the
next scene...

So am I.
giggle

Well, just to
remind you, I will be
getting a little rough with
Amelia in this next scene,
but I know you understand
it's all for the sake
of--

Yes, yes, I know.
Go ahead and do whatever
you think the scene demands.
Amelia's a strong, courageous
girl. (Why, I'm sure she's
even looking forward to
the next scene.)

Yes. *Sigh*
My very first
onstage kiss.

Kiss?

What's this
about an onstage
kiss?

YIPE !
W-W-Well...
I-It's.. An
artistic decision
of mine. Although
Shakespeare himself
never wrote it into
the stage directions,
it's common practice
for directors to
insert a kiss into
the "nunnery"
scene.

HEELLLLLPPP !!!!

Huh ?

...to imply the depth
of the relationship between
the two characters. This is
something I planned on
doing--



FIREBALL!!





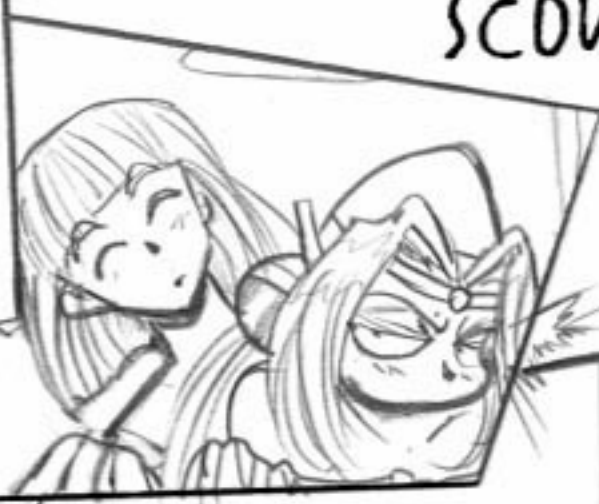
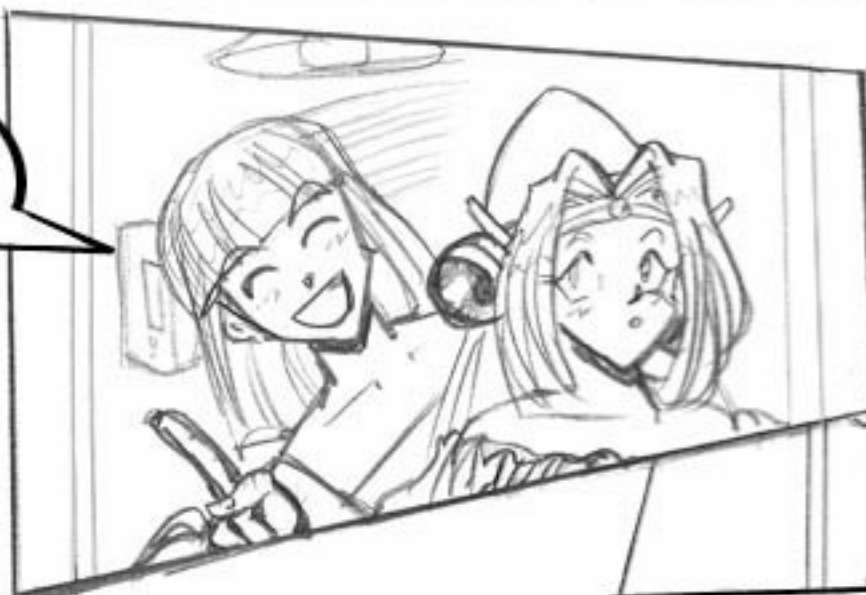
Mr. Director!
When is Act Three going
to start? The audience
is getting restless!



Okay. It'll
start as soon as
things get cleaned
up back here. We'll
ask Rezo to cast
his "time-reverse"
spell again...

Anyone
got a clue as to
where he could
be now?

I know
where he is!
I'll go get
him!



SCOWL!



Sigh Oh gods..
I wonder what OTHER
problems could be
looming over me right
now...



Hmmm...
Rezo's time-
reversal spell...

Hmmm...

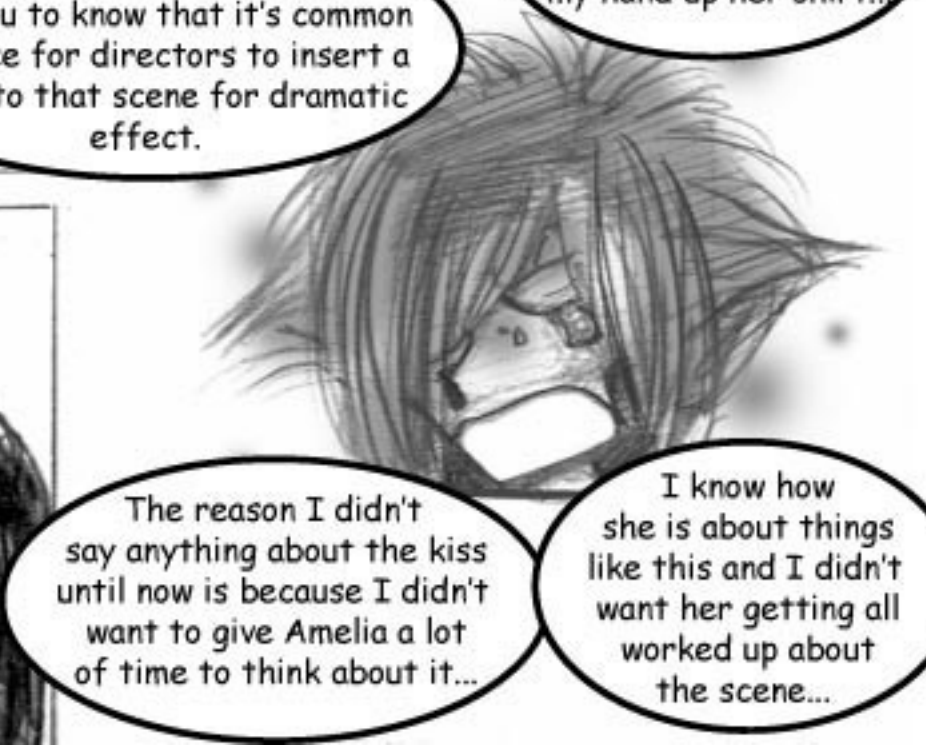
Ahem! *coff!* Well, I just
want you to know that it's common
practice for directors to insert a
kiss into that scene for dramatic
effect.

I mean, it's not
like I'm going to be
Ethan Hawke and stick
my hand up her shirt...



Ah... Prince
Phil!...Hi!

About that
kiss with Amelia...



The reason I didn't
say anything about the kiss
until now is because I didn't
want to give Amelia a lot
of time to think about it...

I know how
she is about things
like this and I didn't
want her getting all
worked up about
the scene...



Well, since it's only a play, I guess whatever you decide to do in the scene is alright with me, Mr. Zeligadis.

Well, whatever happens, I know I'M not going to be nervous!

Hey, Mr. Director... Is that a blush I see under all that soot?



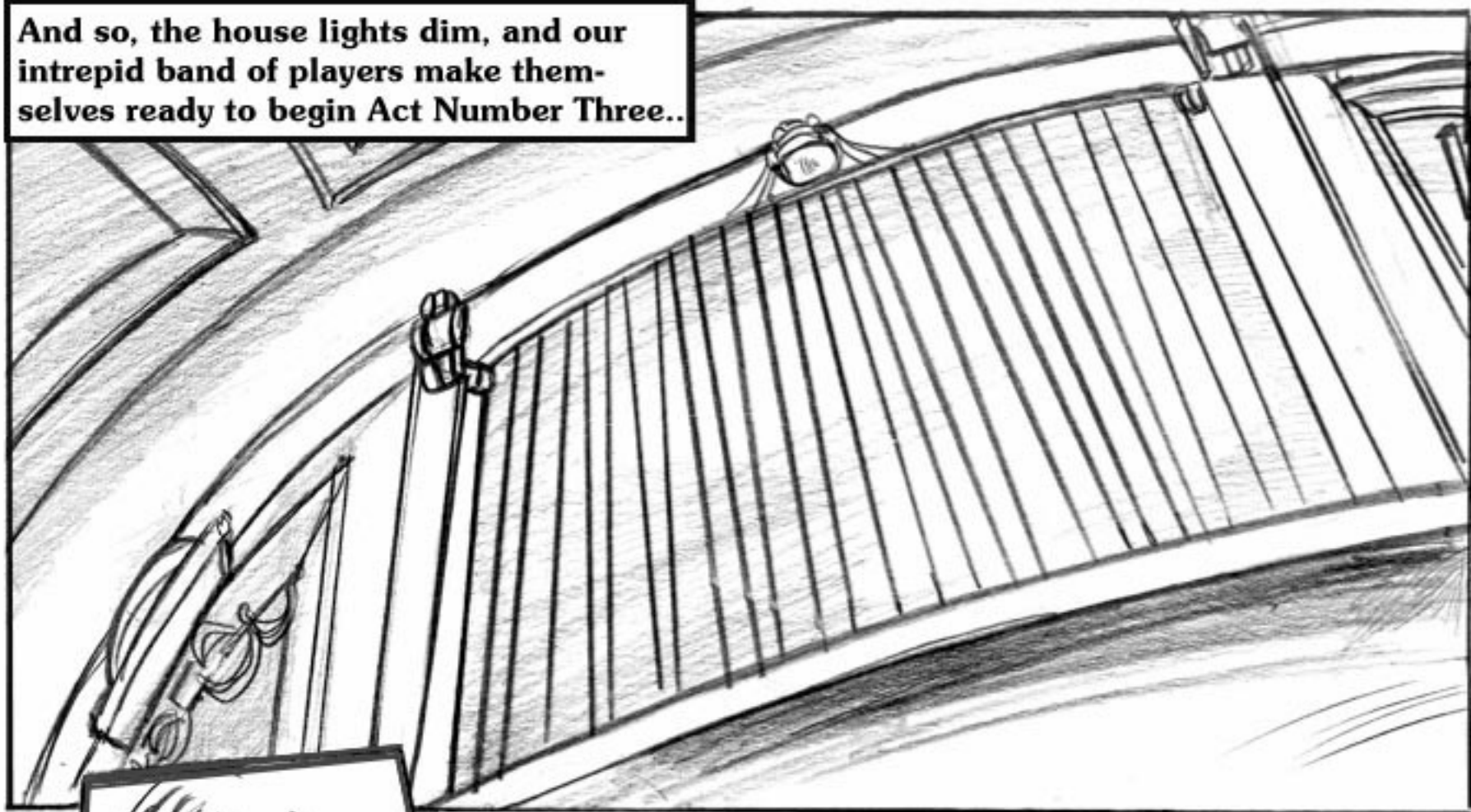
Allright, everyone! To your places! The curtain will be rising in a few minutes!

Bet that's not the ONLY thing that's going to be rising in a few minutes...

Oh, go and hoist yourself on your own petard, Horatio!



And so, the house lights dim, and our intrepid band of players make themselves ready to begin Act Number Three..



Well, thanks once again for your help, Rezo. I have to say that this ALMOST makes up for your turning me into a chimera...

Especially when I could've turned you into a troll or a newt, or some being incapable of reading and putting on a Shakespearean tragedy...

But just think, had I done so, none of us would be here right now...

Yeah, well, I find myself really starting to regret that decision now...



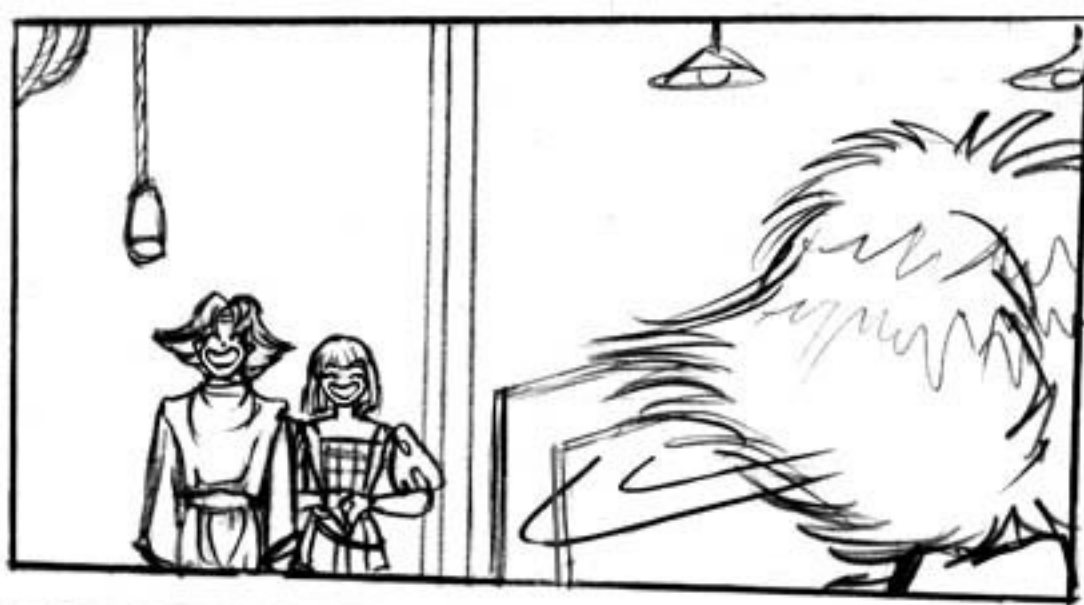
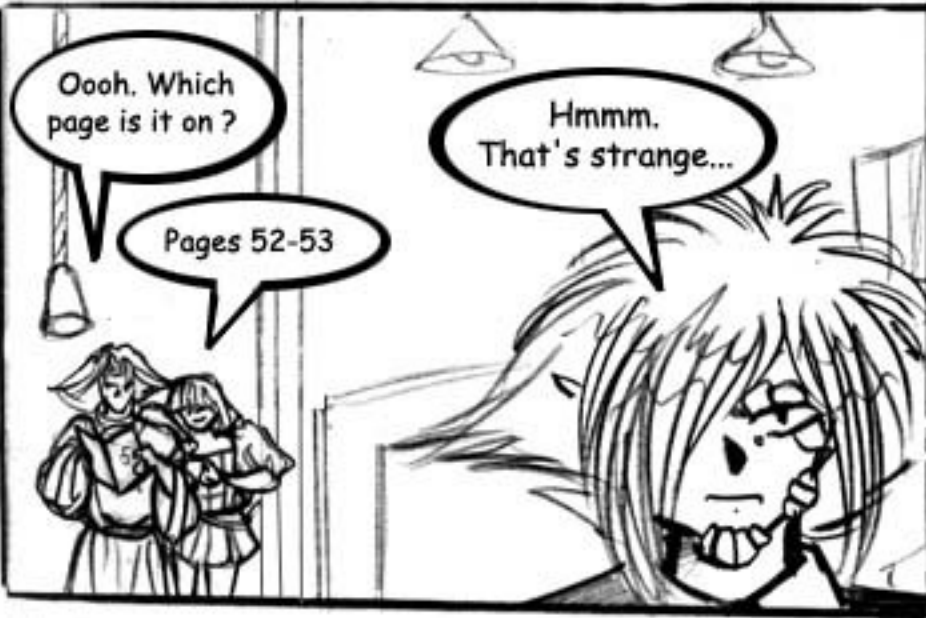
Psst! Rezo! When you've finished up here! Can I ask you to do something for me?

A little favor from one purple-haired, staff-slinging, squinty-eyed priest to another?

Oh my... That would REALLY be a tragedy...







**Next up:
Act
Three**

Hamlet: The Manga

Act III

Mpf! Wh- Whaz goin' on here ?

Whooaa.. Wazz goin' on here ? Whazzup with them chainin' the bed to the ceiling ?...

They afraid someone gonna steal it ?..Hey... that carpet looks like it's MOVIN'...

Wuh-oh... I've run out of booze...again.... better gessumore...

I hope wherever I am, there's a liquor store nearby...

unnnhhh...

Hey ! Whazz the deal with this mattress ?

It sinks AWFUL LOW in the middle...



Well, this is the last time I stay in THIS damn hotel...

Ahem. Ladies and gentlemen... Sorry for the delay. We now present you with Act Three of our drama...



As you'll recall, in Act Two, Hamlet's mother and uncle tried to learn the cause of Prince Hamlet's madness and melancholy.

They did this by arranging to have Hamlet's old school friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, visit with the prince, in the hopes that he would confide in them...



However, the two men were unable to learn anything, and when they returned back to the king and queen, they had nothing to report except their own failure. It would appear that King Claudius' attempts to learn the truth behind Hamlet's behavior is stymied for the time being...



But Polonius, the king's advisor, has a plan. Believing Hamlet's madness to be a result of his love for his daughter, Ophelia...

He hits upon a way that
he can use that love to get
Hamlet to reveal his in-most
thoughts to the lady...



...While he himself eavesdrops
on the both of them from a
nearby hiding place...



Ophelia, being the dutiful and
obedient daughter, agrees to help
her father out with his plan.
Polonius guides his daughter to a
place in the castle where Hamlet will
be sure to find her and commands
her to sit quietly while reading a
book.

Then he gives her a set
of instructions on what to do
once the prince arrives...



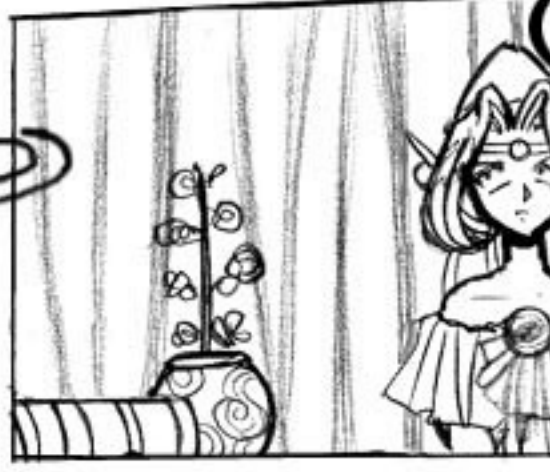
...putting the words into
her mouth, which she
must say to him.



This being done,
he takes his leave of her,
and slips--



He takes his leave of
her, and slips behind a
nearby arras.



Where he will
wait and observe
the both of
them--

--ahh...both of them--

uh...wait and....
observe...uhhh... the
both of.....

SHOOOM

AHA! I
KNEW YOU
WERE HIDING HERE
YOU MAZOKU SCU--

Huh?

Where IS that
slimy little namagomi?
Where'd he go?

I don't
understand.
I know he
was here.
I could
SENSE him...

Oh gods.. It's
FILIA'S turn to
drive me insane
now...



Allright, Rezo !
Now's your chance !
Cast the spell !

Ah... How far
back did you want me
to "time-reverse"
Filia's brain ?



ANY point
in time BEFORE she
started learning her
lines. It doesn't
matter when !

<<About six
months ago
ought to do the
trick. Make
sure she
forgets
EVERY-
THING !>>

Xelloss...



Uh, Miss
Filia... Is there
something
wrong ?

So that's his
game. To play hide
and seek with me...

Well if that slimy
trickster thinks I'm going
to stand here and let him
make a fool out of me, he's
dead wrong !



Oh, I wouldn't
be too sure about
that, Filia...



Now try to stay calm, Miss Filia. It's never a good idea to lose control over one's emotions. As a great justice-loving philosopher once said...



Sigh Well... I guess there's nothing I can do now, except go back to my place...

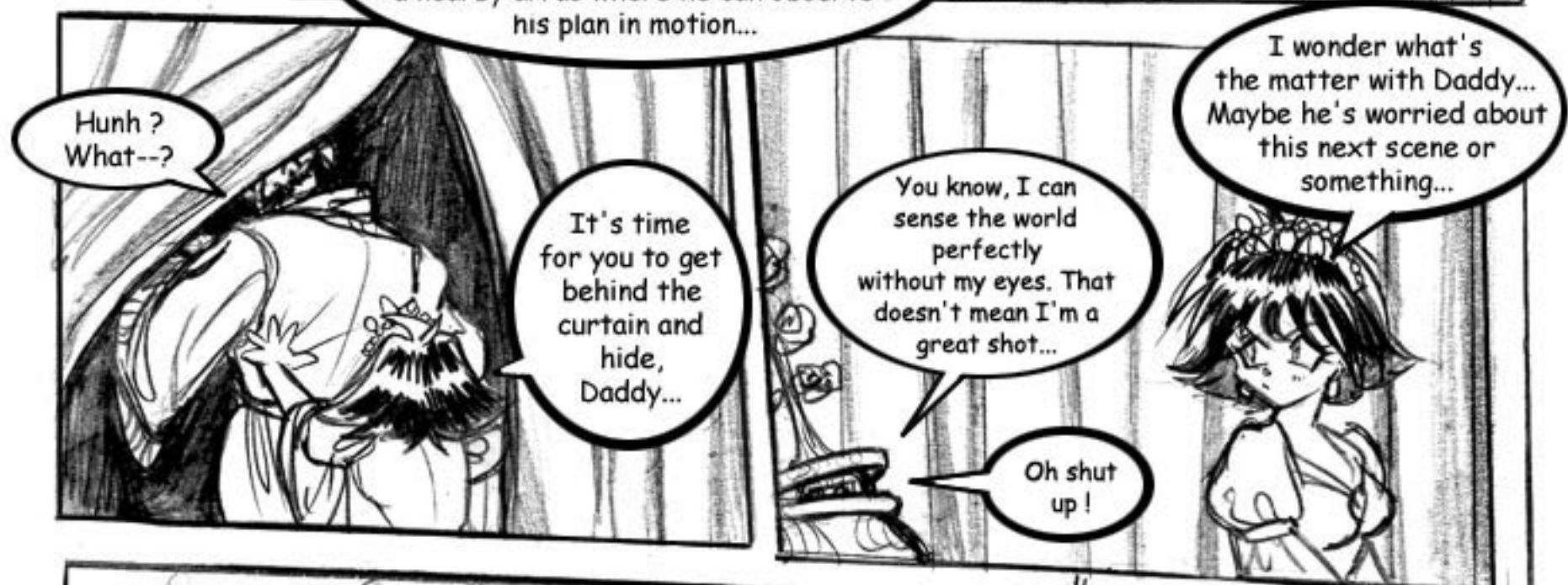
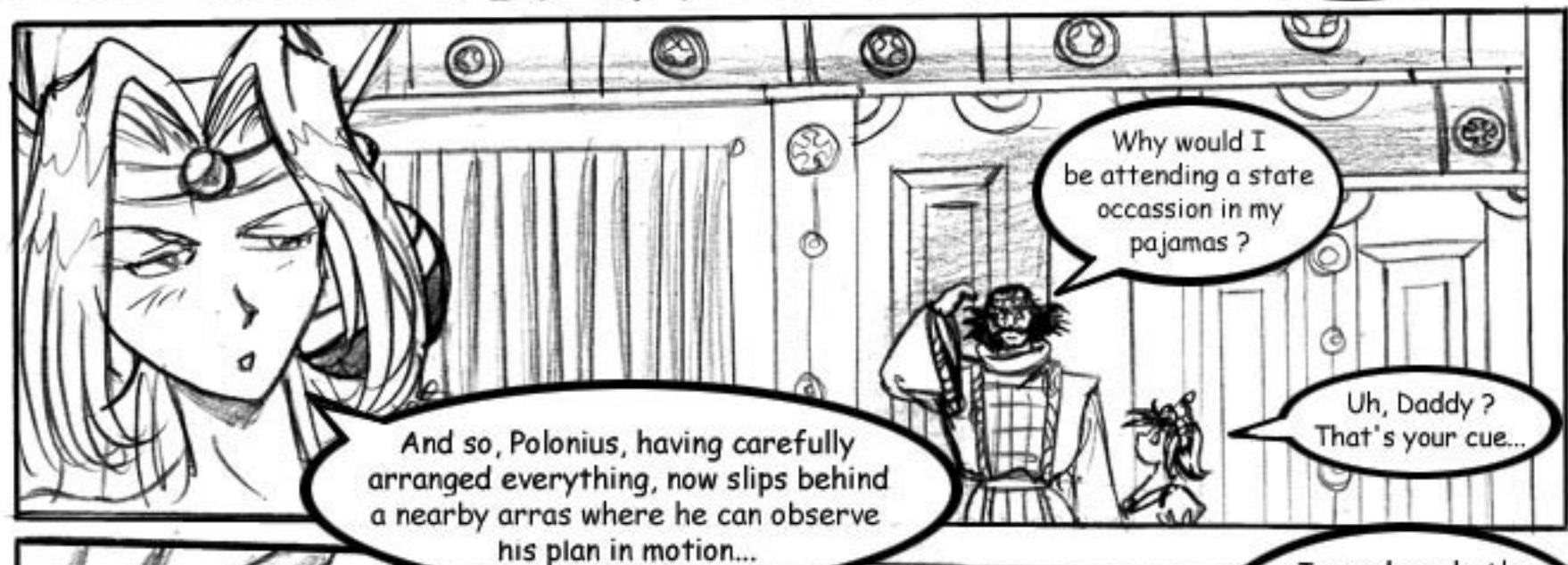


What's going on? Why am I dressed like this? Is this some state occasion?




I think you'd better. And quickly. Mr. Zelgadis doesn't look like he's very happy right now...






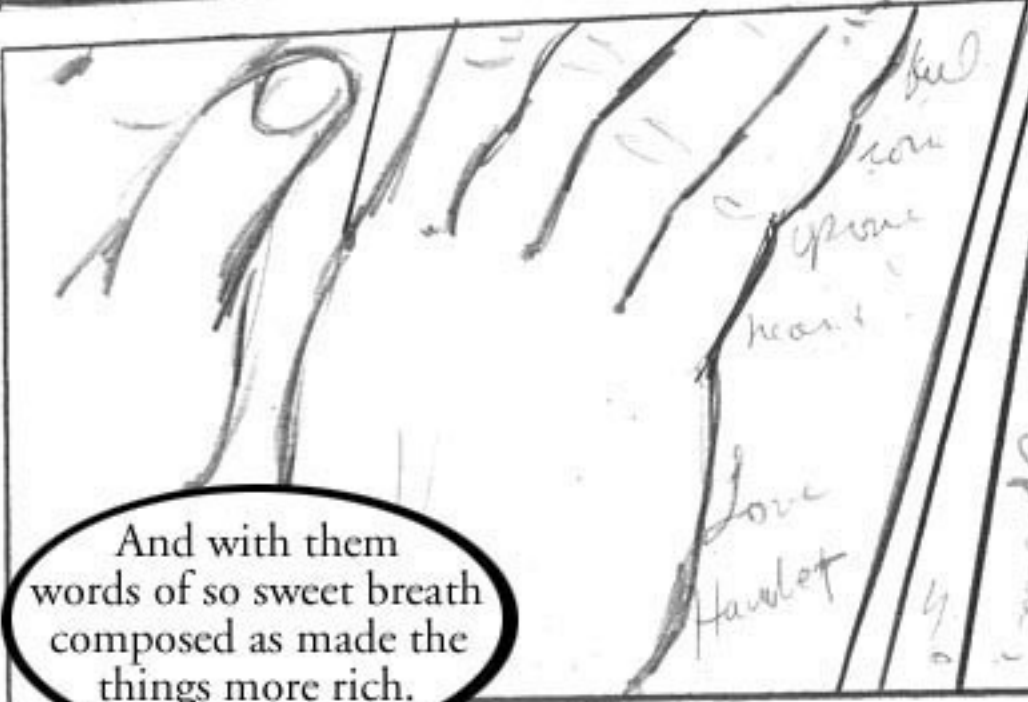




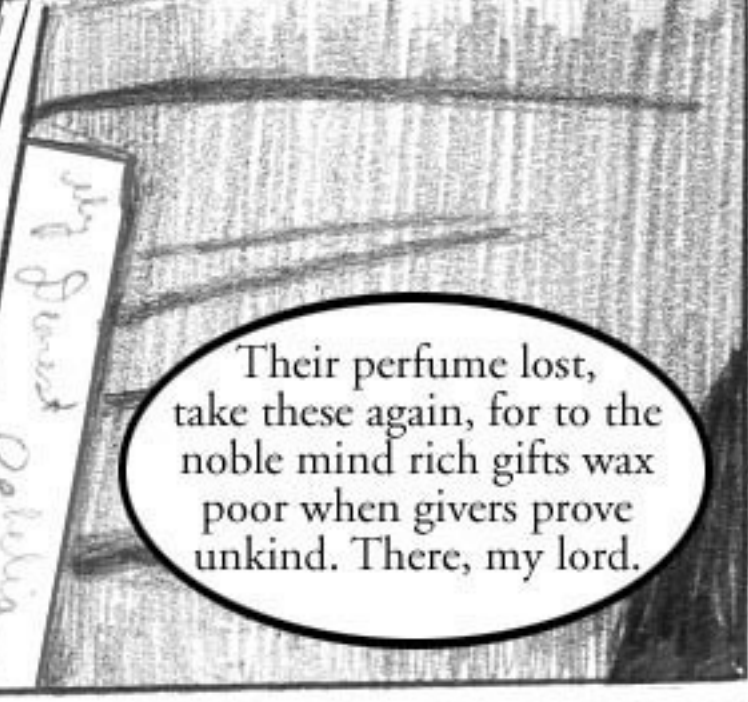
No, not I.
I never gave
you
aught.




My honored
lord, you know
right well
you did.



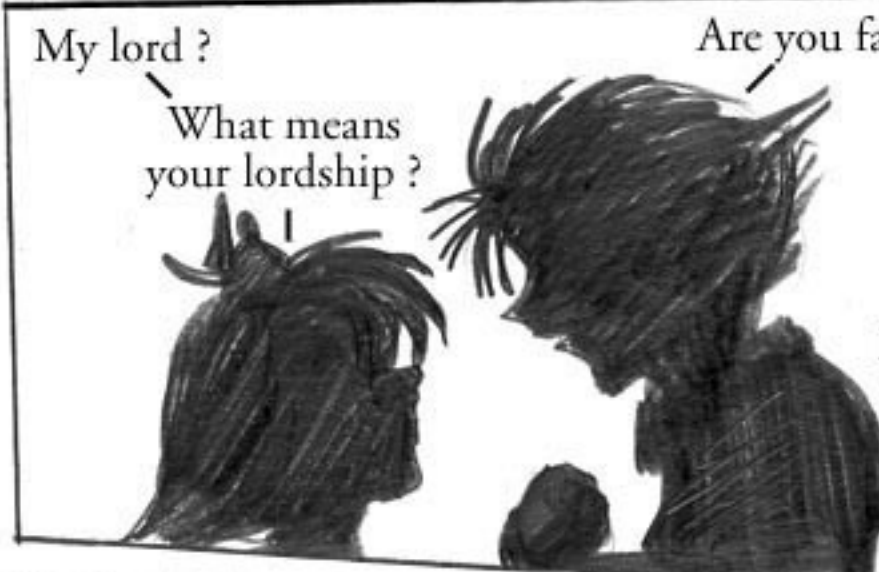
And with them
words of so sweet breath
composed as made the
things more rich.



Their perfume lost,
take these again, for to the
noble mind rich gifts wax
poor when givers prove
unkind. There, my lord.



Ha, ha,
are you
honest?




My lord?

What means
your lordship?


Are you fair?

That if you
be honest and
fair, your
honesty should
admit no
discourse to
your beauty.



This dream is
getting WEIRD...
What kind of a strange
language are they
talking to each other in?

Could beauty, my lord,
have better commerce than
with honesty?



All this talk
about beauty... All this
looking into each other's
eyes... I wonder what
it means...

It's like they're in love.
But why would I be dreaming
about that? Is this supposed
to be a prophetic dream?

I did love
you once.

Indeed, my lord,
you made me
believe so.

You should not have
believed me, for virtue
cannot so inoculate our
old stock but we
shall relish of it. I
loved you not.

I was the
more deceived.

Get thee to a
nunnery. Why
wouldst thou
be a breeder
of sinners? I
am myself
indifferent
honest...

...but yet I could
accuse me of such things that
it were better my mother
had not borne me.

What should such fellows as I
do crawling between earth and heaven?
We are arrant knaves all; believe
none of us. Go thy ways to a
nunnery!



HER
FATHER



This...
dream is
becoming more
like a
nightmare...

I'm
starting
to think it ISN'T
a dream... And if it
isn't, Mr. Zelgadis
had better have a
good explanation
of why he's treat-
ing Amelia this
way...

Where's your
father?

At
home,
my
lord.

Let the doors
be shut upon him--

--that he may
play the fool nowhere
but in 's own house!



O help him,
you sweet heavens!

If thou dost
marry, I'll give
thee this
plague for thy
dowry:

Be thou as
chaste as
ice, as pure
as snow,
thou shalt
not escape
calumny.

Get thee
to a nunnery,
farewell.

Or if thou wilt
needs marry, marry a
fool, for wise men
know well enough
what fools you make
of them.



To a nunnery, go, and
quickly too. Farewell.



Heavenly powers,
restore him !



I have heard of your
paintings, too, well enough.
God hath given you one
face and you make your-
selves another.

You jig and amble,
and you lisp; you nickname
God's creatures and make
your wantonness your
ignorance.



Go to, I'll
no more on 't. It
hath made me
mad !

It hath
made me
MAD !!!



Okay,
Amelia... This
is where the
kiss happens...
You ready ?

Y-Yes....







Hunh ?





**And just WHAT do
you think you're
doing, Mr.
Zelgadis ?!!**

I-I-I'm doing
wh-what we discussed...
You know... What I had
to do for this scene...
You know... You said you
were... okay with it...





Dream or no, I can't just stand by and let something so UNJUST happen to my precious daughter! I know she makes you mad, Mr. Zelgadis! But that's no reason to abuse her!



Um.. Daddy? Please don't get upset...

I'm OKAY with what he's doing. Really!



Whoa. Looks like our director is in BIG trouble. And it's all our fault...

I thought you were trustworthy! A man above suspicion! To think that you're the kind of man who'd force himself upon an innocent girl... It makes ME MAD!!!



As the ones responsible for this situation, it is our solemn social duty to climb out of here and try to explain things to Phil...

Even though such an action would put us at risk of exposure and punishment...



But there's no getting around such action if we want to save Zelgadis...



"IF" being an operative term here...



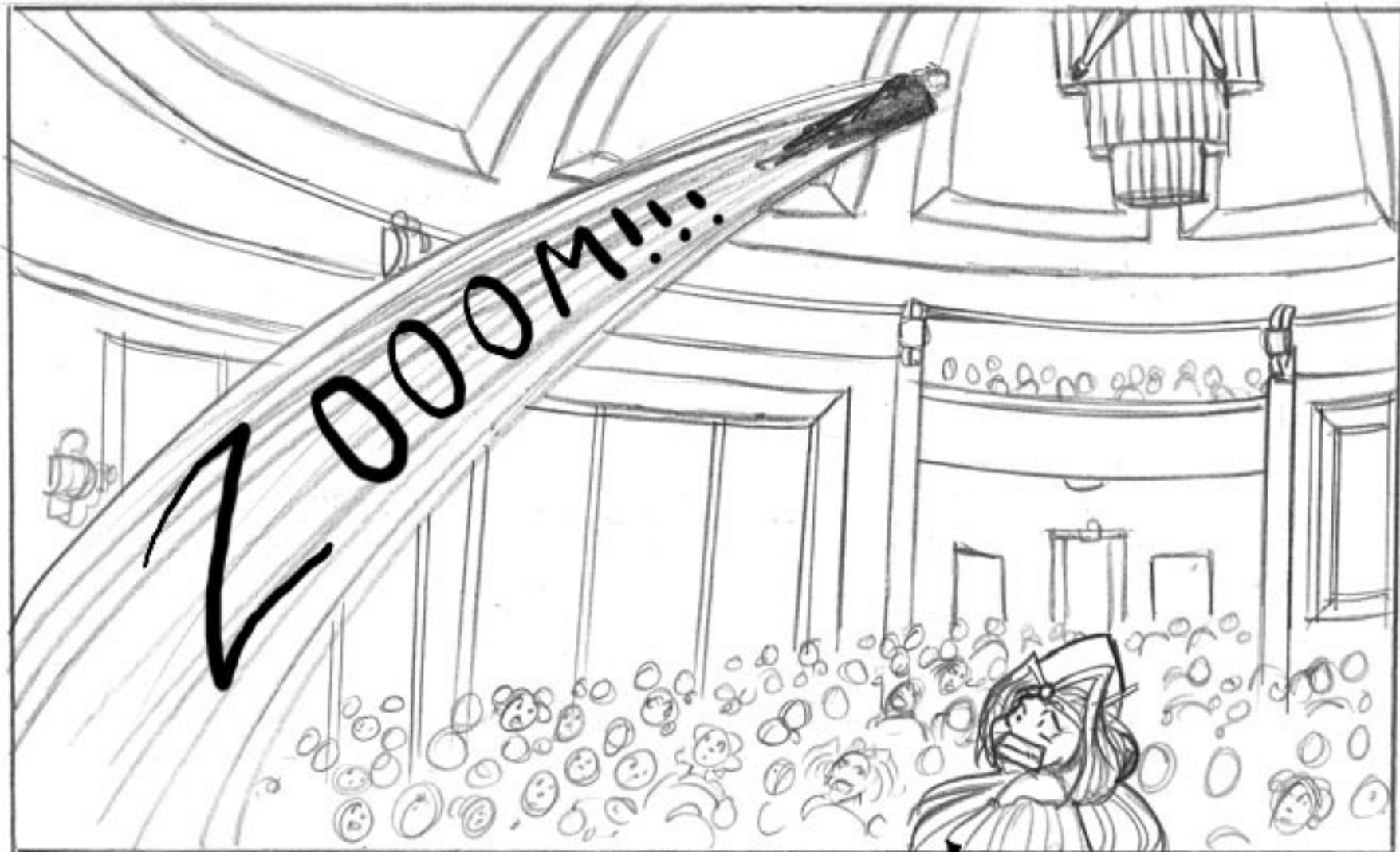
Of course...

Now now,
Phil. If you just
calm down, we can
discuss this issue in
a rational manner.
I'm sure you'll see
that this is nothing
but a simple mis--

Pacifist--

CRUSSHH !!!!!

ZOOOMM!!

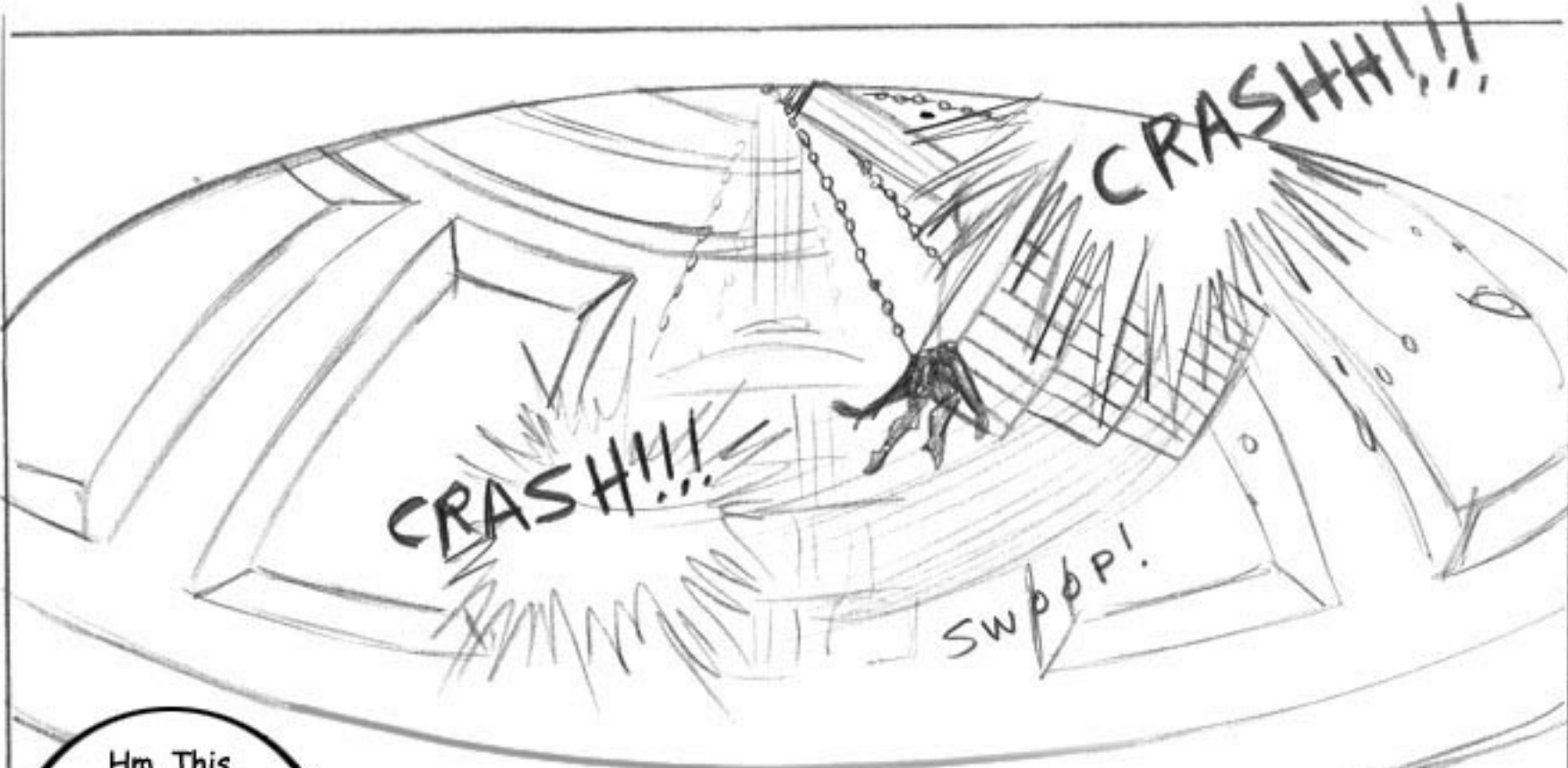


Hufh ? *snorfle*



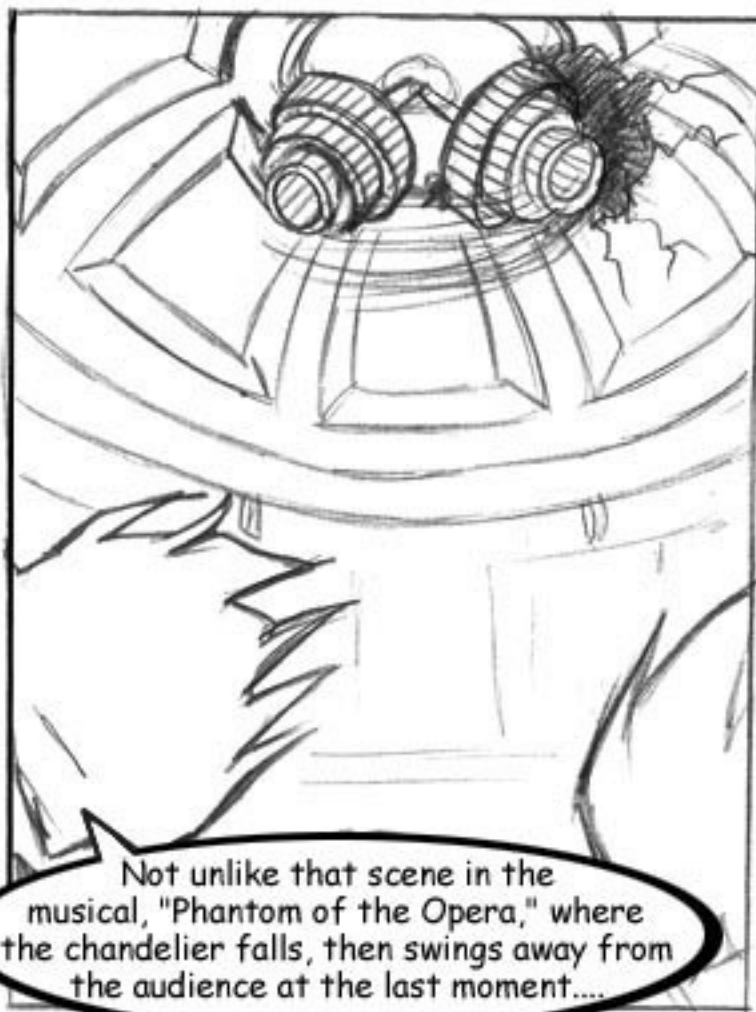
YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH !!!





Hm. This play has taken an unusual turn. I do not recall these events as being an integral part of the plot.

It's most likely some fanciful invention of the director's...



Not unlike that scene in the musical, "Phantom of the Opera," where the chandelier falls, then swings away from the audience at the last moment....



In other words, just a cheap, diversionary tactic to keep the audience from getting bored...(or more bored than it is already...)



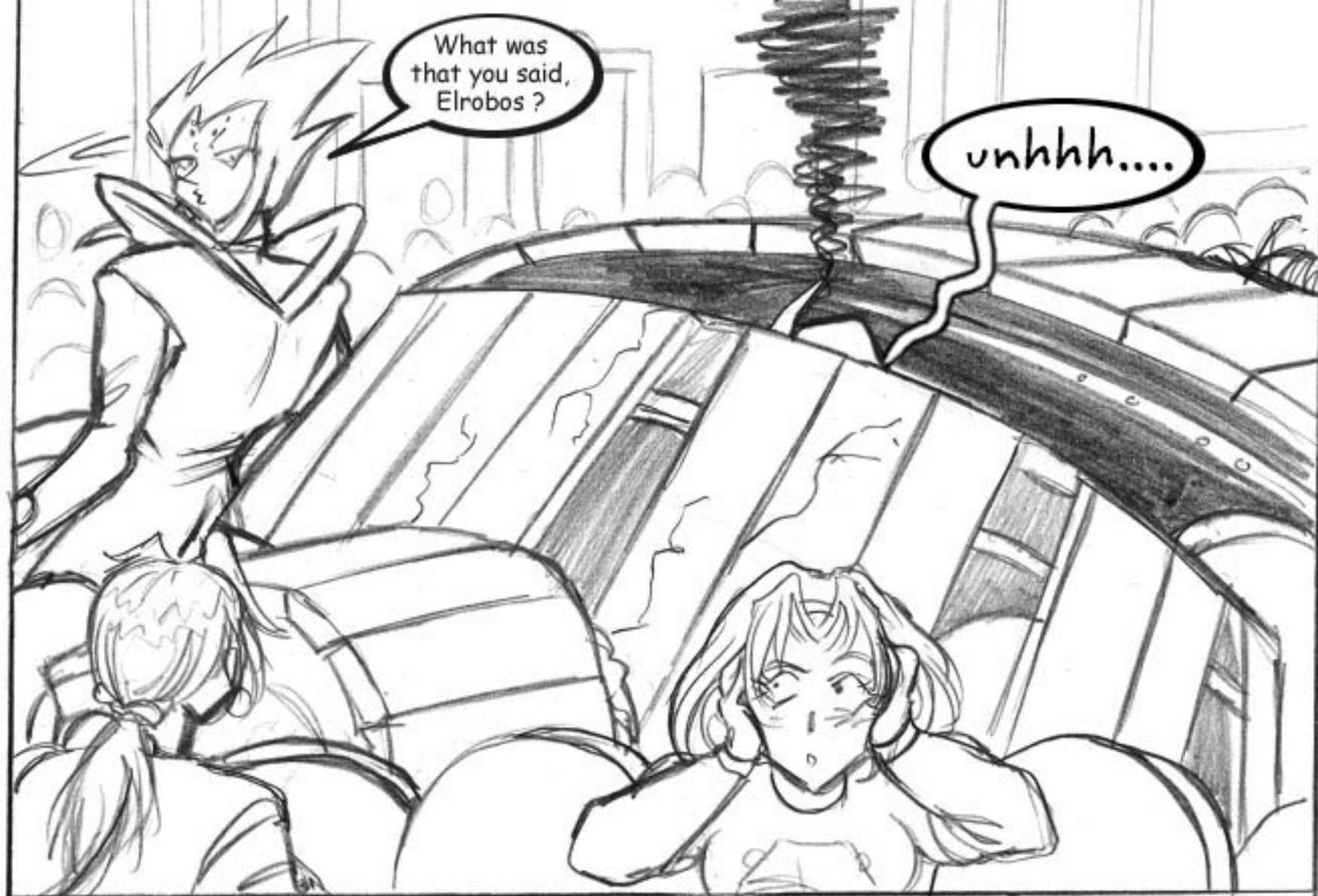
I see...



Almace has been gone a while... I had better go and see where he wandered off to...

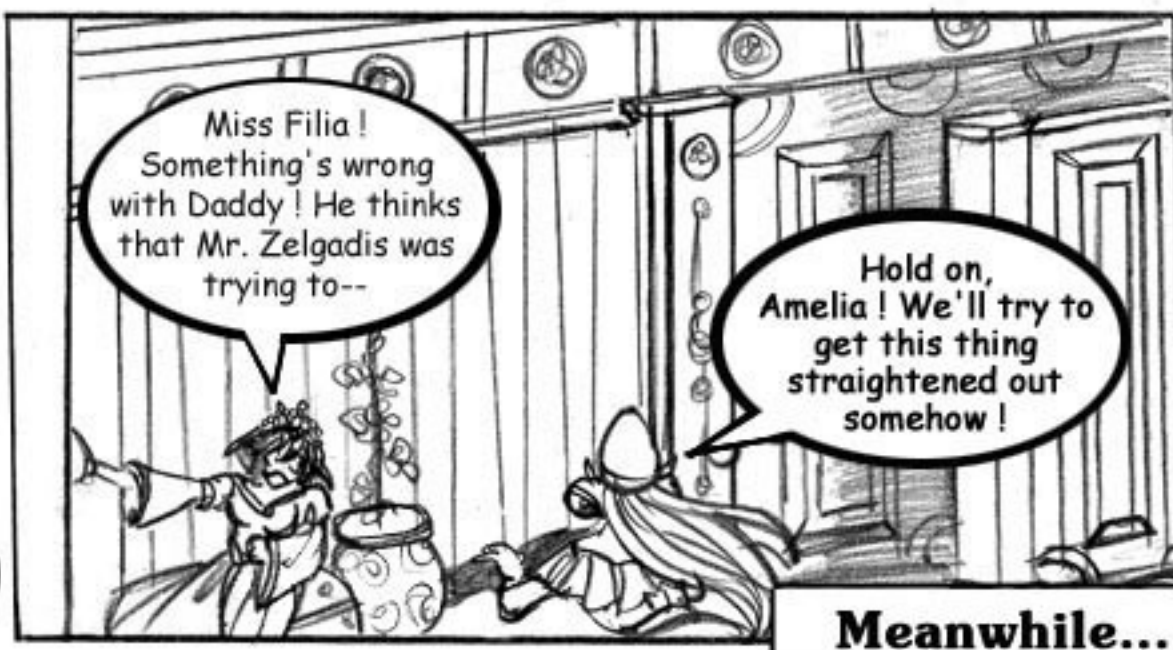
Hurry back. You never know. Something exciting may be about to happen any minute now.

CRASSSHH !!!

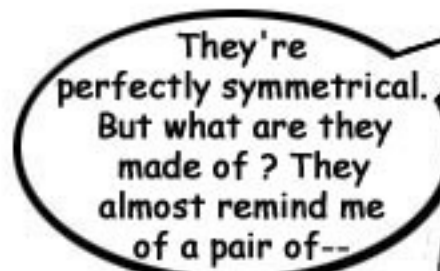


What was that you said, Elrobos?

unhhh....

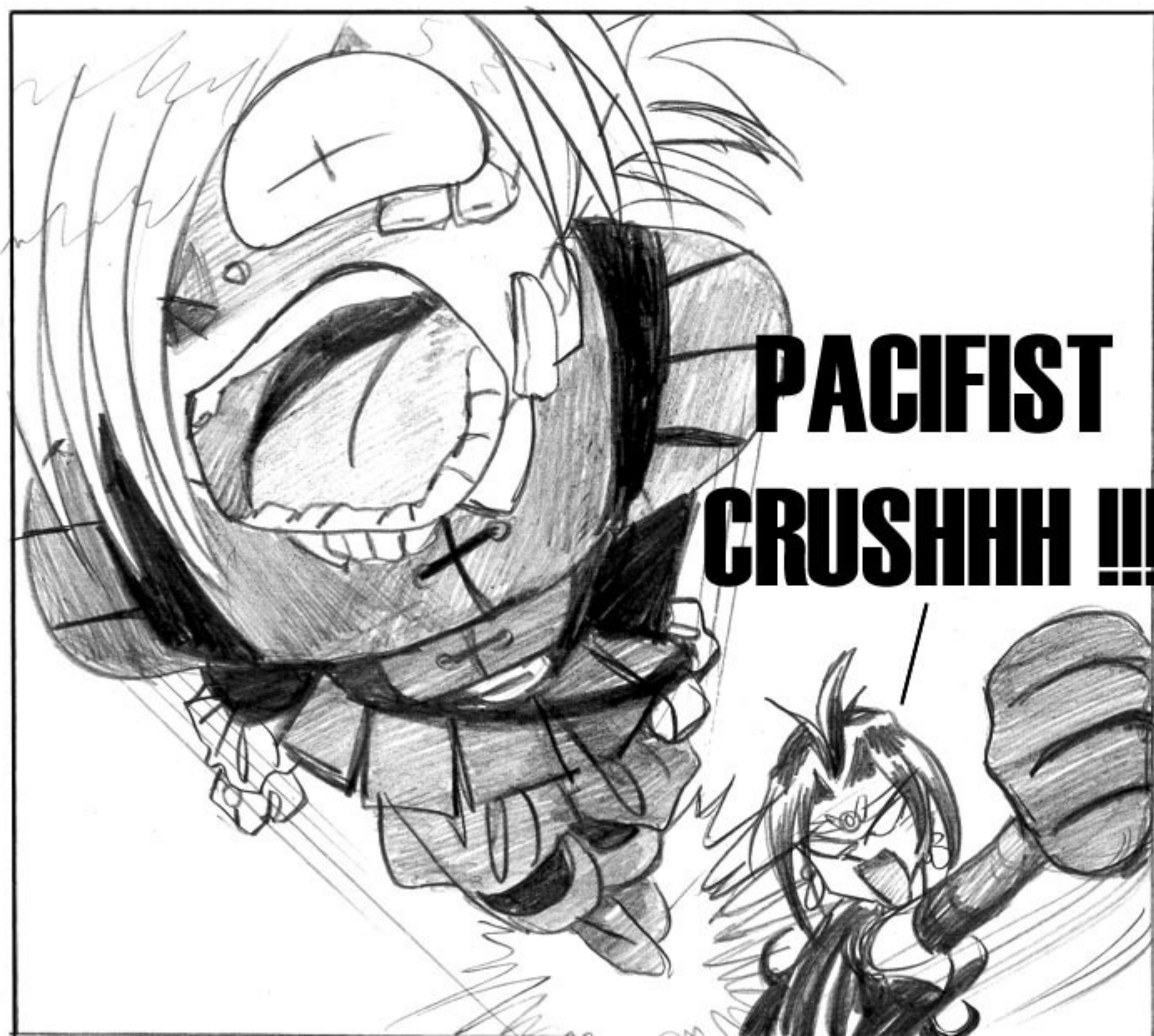


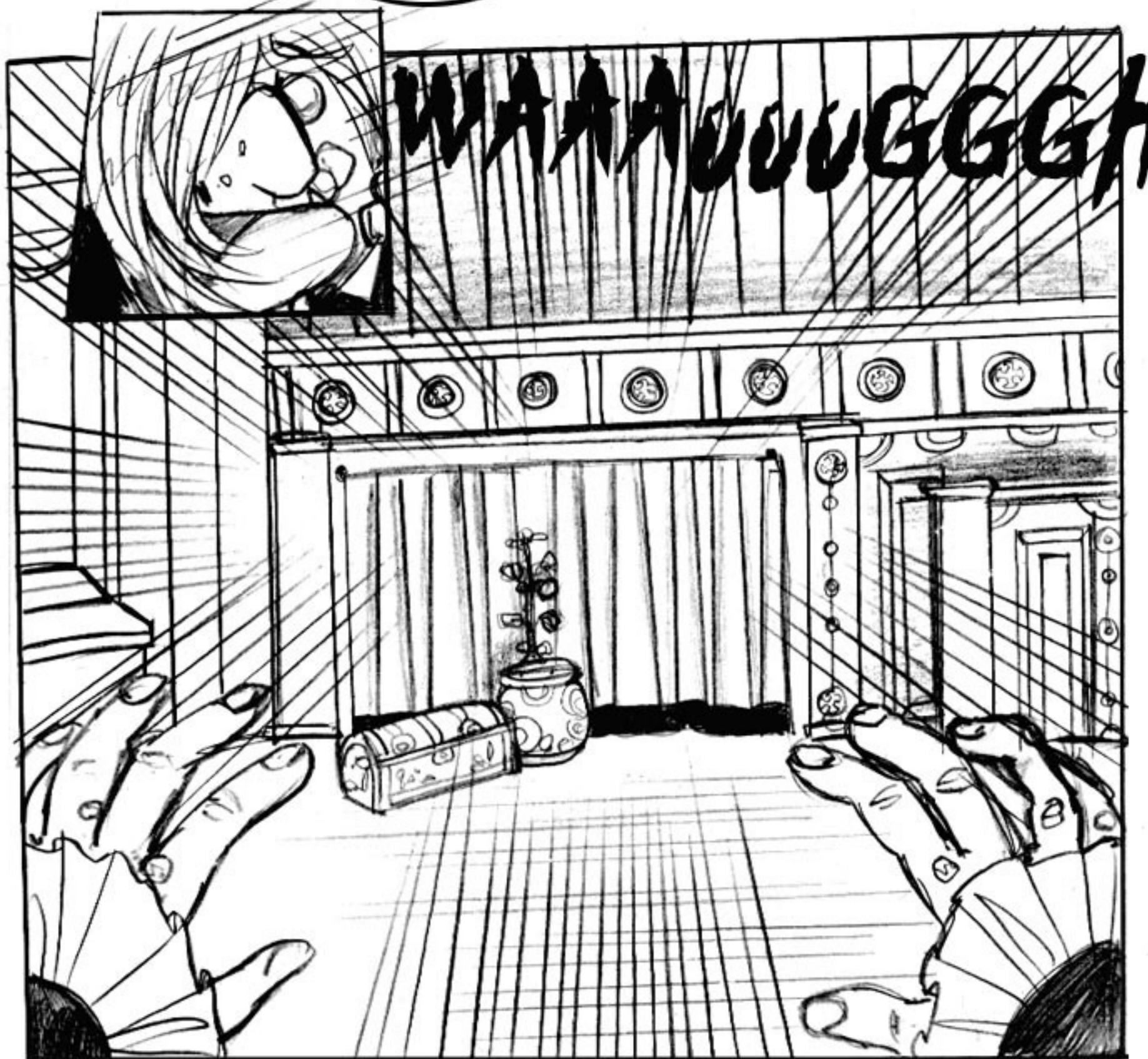
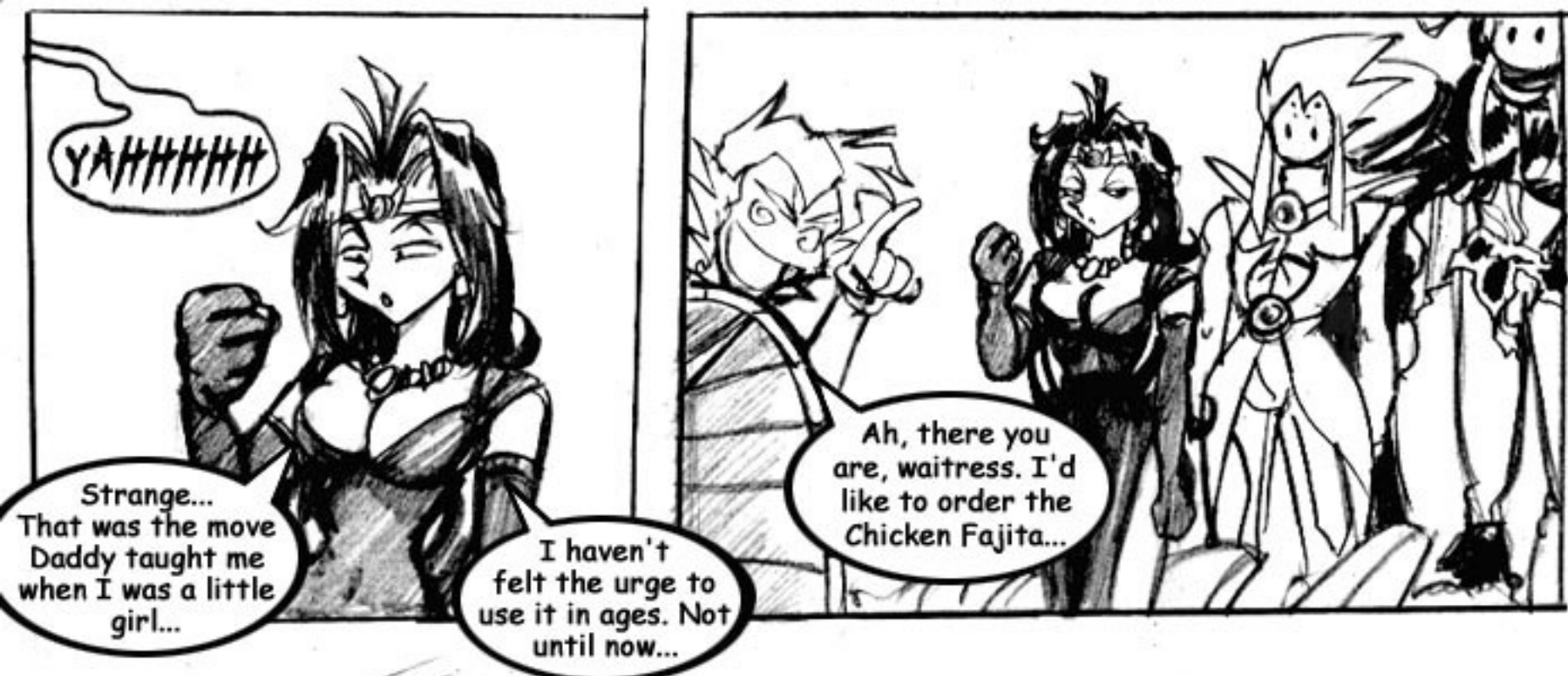
Meanwhile...





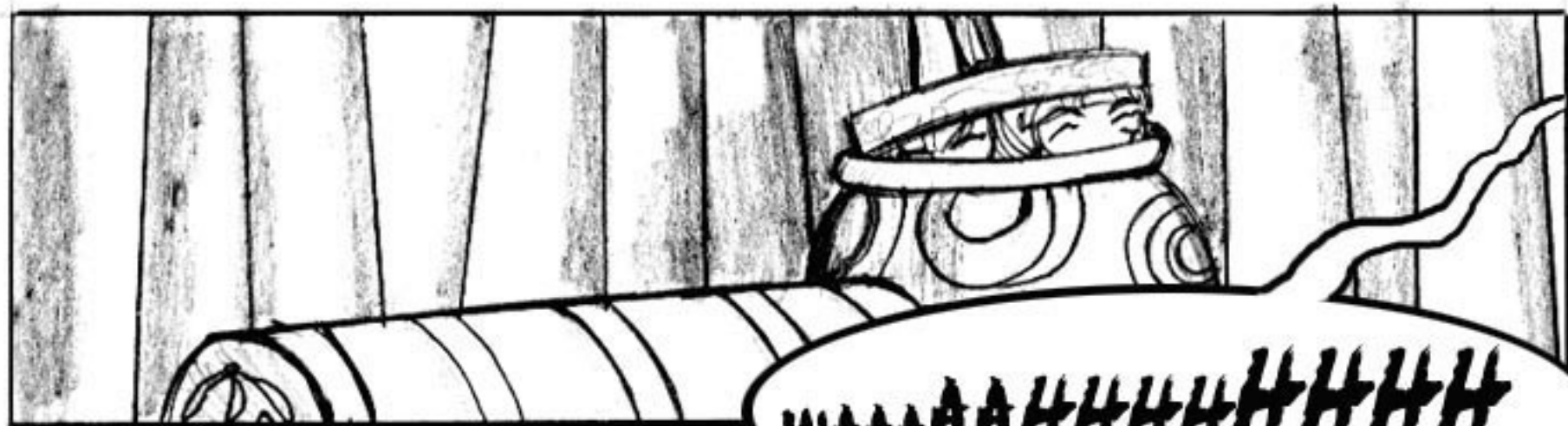
P....Pervert....



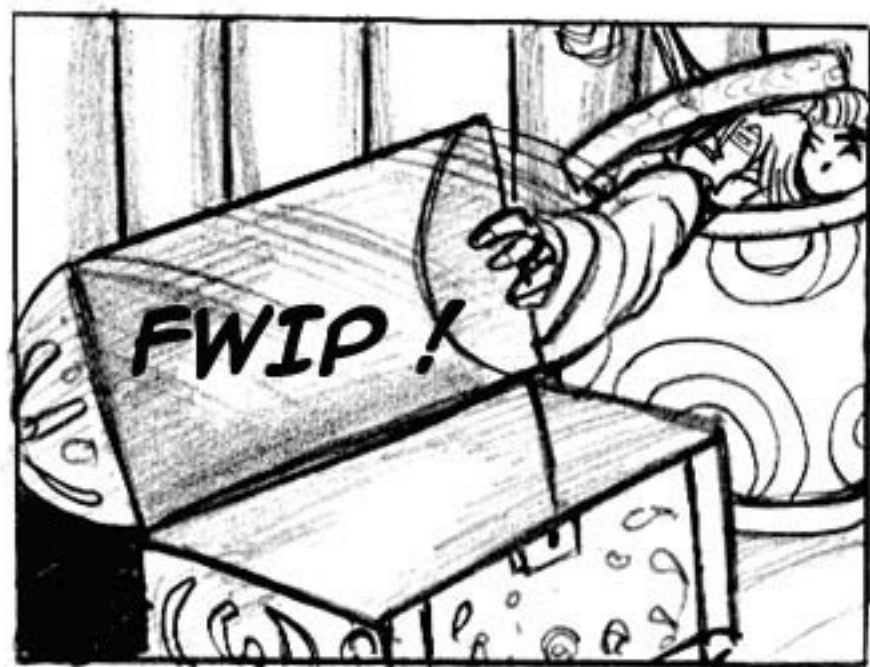




Uh-oh. Here comes our illustrious director. If we don't do something to help him **THIS** time, he's finished for sure.



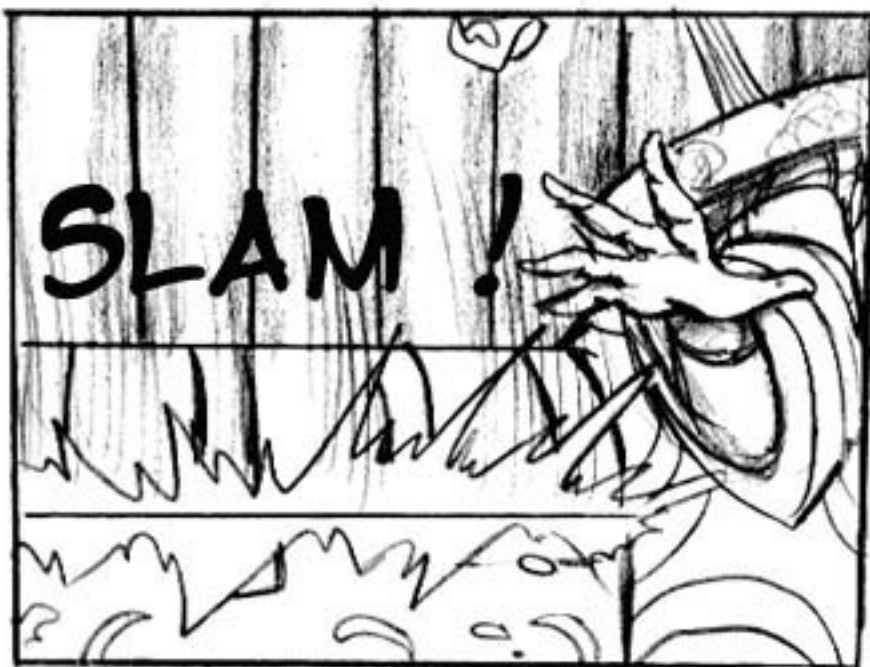
WAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH



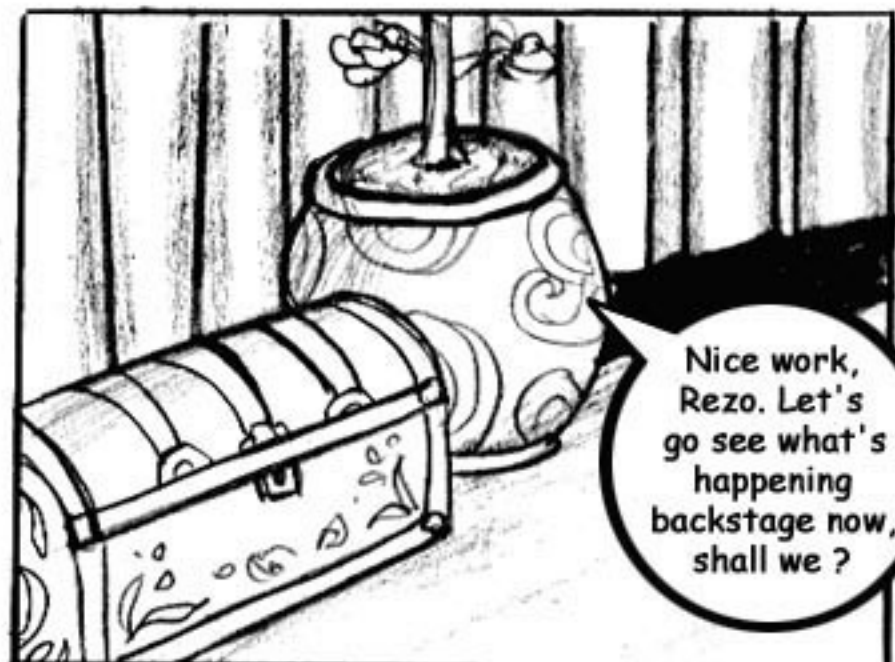
FWIP !



THUNK !



SLAM !



Nice work, Rezo. Let's go see what's happening backstage now, shall we ?

Backstage...



Oh ye flippin' hairy gods. This is just what we need. So where's Zelgadis right now?

With him gone, I guess we'll just have to cancel the rest of the play and go home.

Hmm... Well... I guess we have to, don't we? If there's no Hamlet, there can't be any play of the same name...

He's vanished. Disappeared. A wise move considering all the lawsuits he's probably facing right now.

Sigh Time to get out of these crazy costumes and go get ourselves something to eat...

Wait! Everyone! We don't HAVE to cancel the play!

"The show must go on!" as they say, and it WILL go on!

With ME in the role of Prince Hamlet! I know all of the lines... And the Ancient Dragon Drama Club voted my Hamlet as the best interpretation of--

What the hell?---

Forget it, Valgarv. It's a wrap. It's over. Time to head home...



Yeah, yeah,
we gotcha. We
understand. Show
must go on. Sacred
tradition. Right.



Excellent, I
shall go now to prepare
for my role whilst you
prepare the stage for
the next scene: The
famous "To Be or Not
To Be" Speech...

IT IS NOT OVER ! IT
ISN'T OVER UNTIL I SAY
IT'S OVER !! THE SHOW
MUST GO ON ! THAT'S
THE SACRED THEATRE
TRADITION ! AND IT
WILL GO ON !!



Sigh. Well, I tried to
catch up with Prince Phil and
Amelia but I lost them around
a corner. What are we going to
do ? Without their characters,
we can't finish the play...

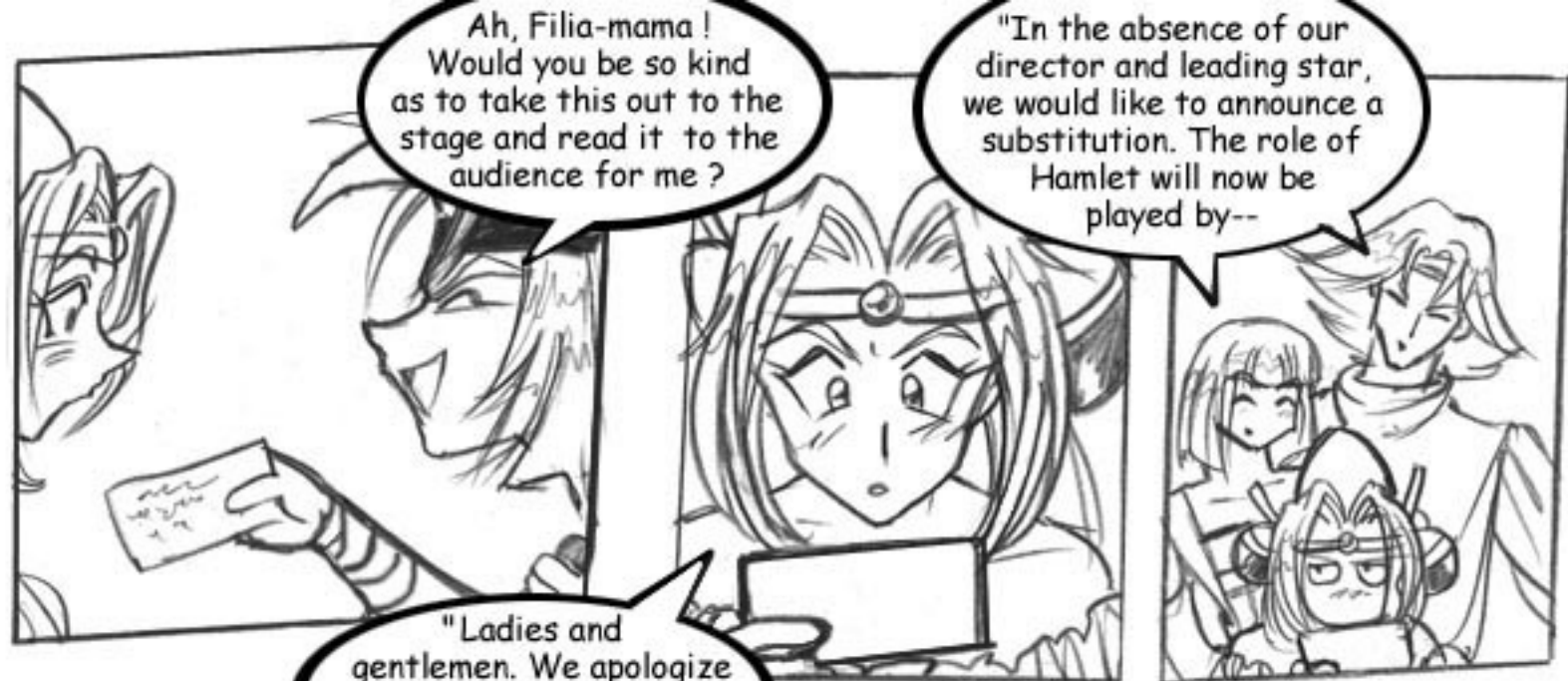


And yet,
"The Show Will
Go On..."



Okay... Doublet...
Jerkin...Cloak...
Tights...

Where in
L-Sama's name
is my
CODPIECE ?



"Ladies and gentlemen. We apologize for tonight's unforeseen technical difficulties...

Xelloss, Rezo... I know in my heart it was a mistake letting THEM in on this play...

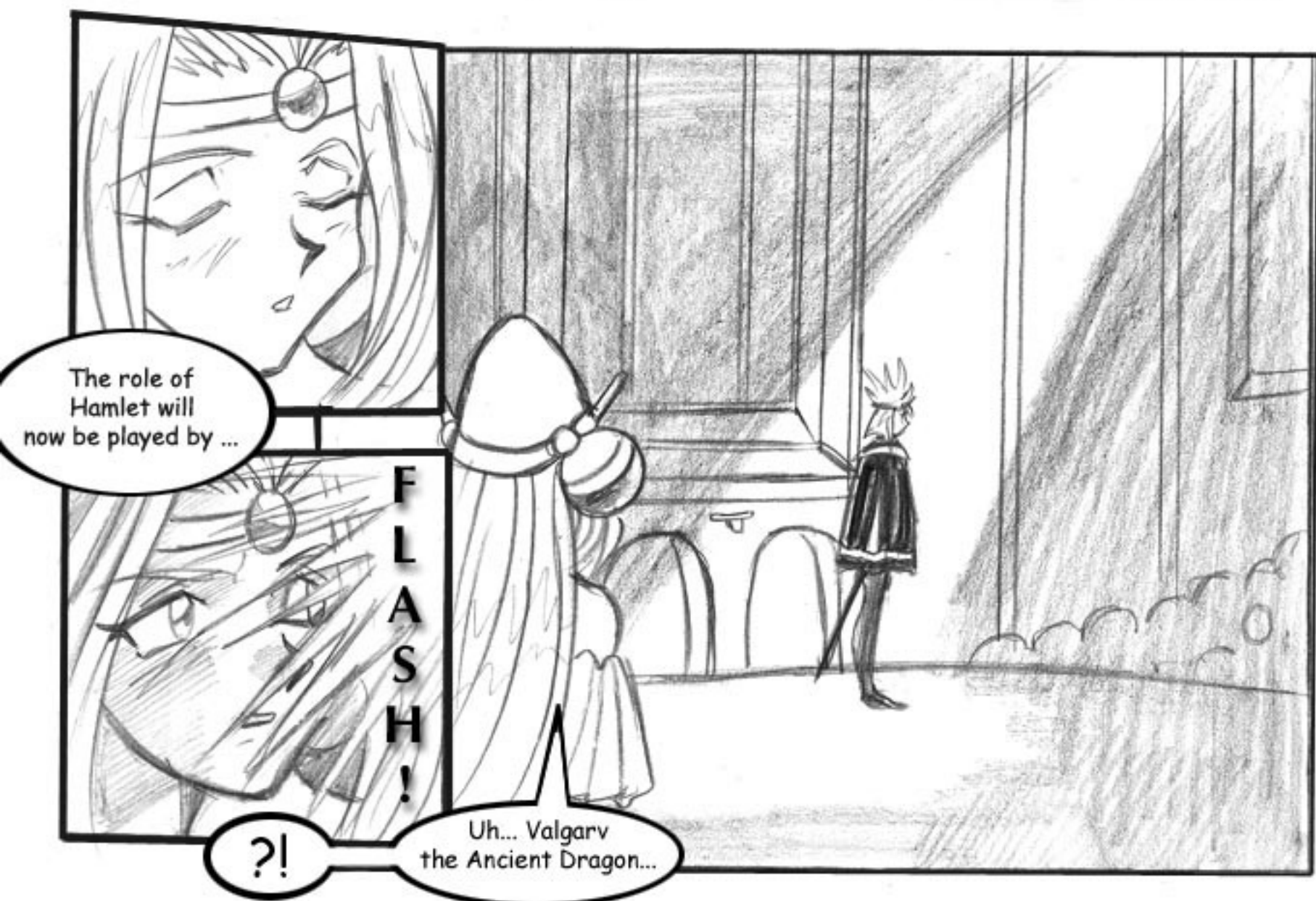
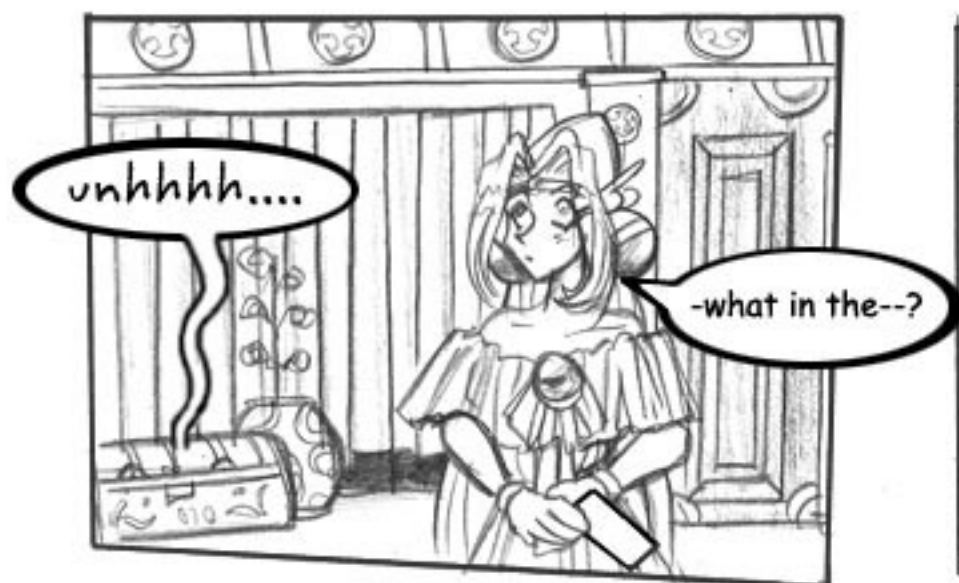
Nope.

Haven't you two anything better to do than read over my shoulder?

Hm. I notice most of the crowd is still here, despite the chandelier having fallen.

In that case, I'm heading for the stage. You two can stay here and amuse yourselves in whatever foul, depraved way you see fit.

My, the people of this universe sure are jaded when it comes to disasters, aren't they? Though I suppose sharing a universe with Lina Inverse will do that to you...





Our scene opens with Prince Hamlet, devastated by what he perceives to be the betrayal of the woman he loves, wandering the castle, contemplating the seeming hopelessness of life...

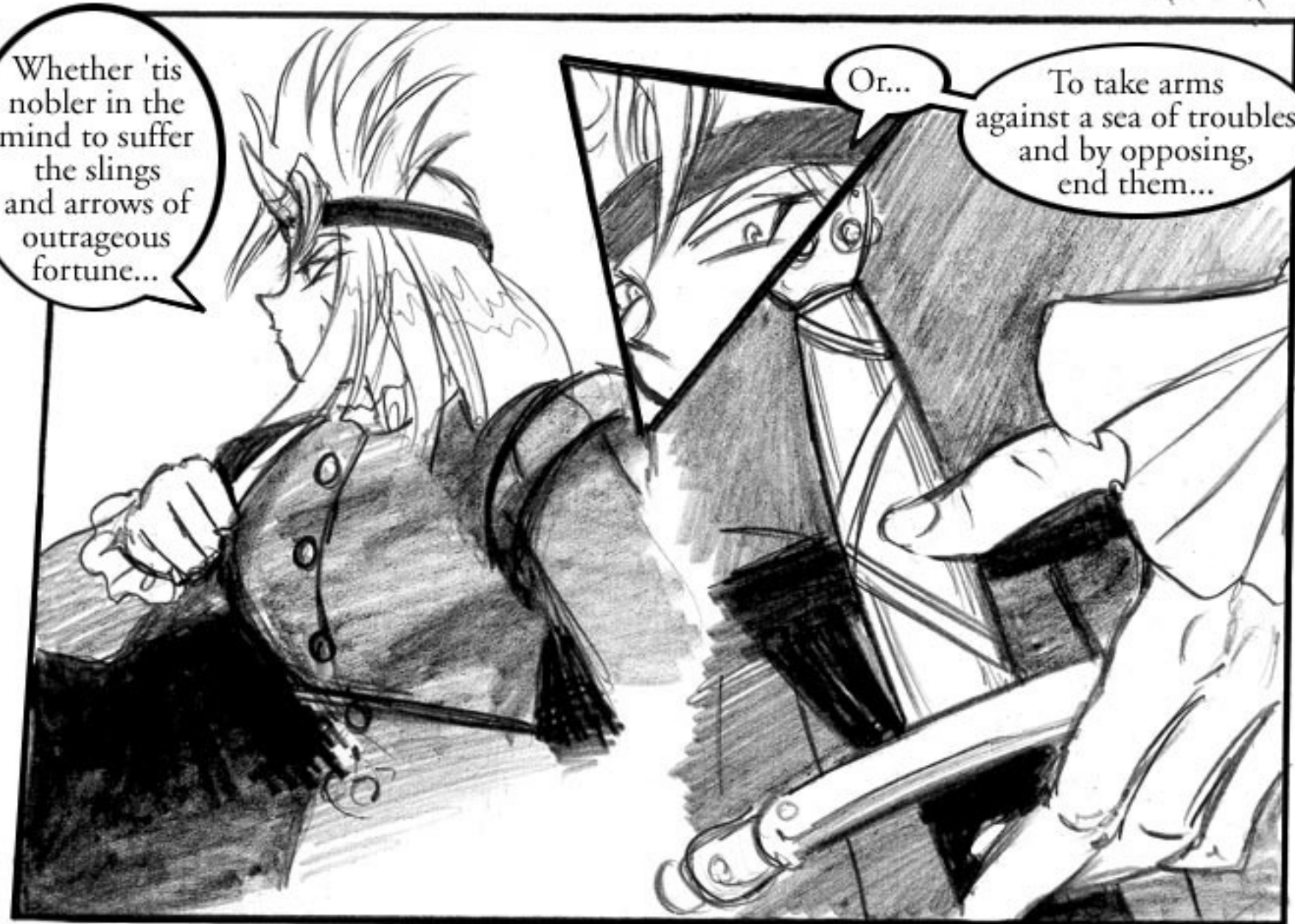


To be, or not to be...



...THAT is the question...

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune...



Or...

To take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing, end them...

To die, to sleep--
No more--and by a sleep
to say we end the heartache
and the thousand natural
shocks that flesh is
heir to...



...'Tis a consummation
devoutly to be wished.

To die, to sleep---
To sleep, perchance to dream...

Ay, **there's** the rub...

For in that sleep of
death what dreams may
come, when we have
shuffled off this mortal
coil must give us pause.

There's the respect that
makes calamity of
so long life.

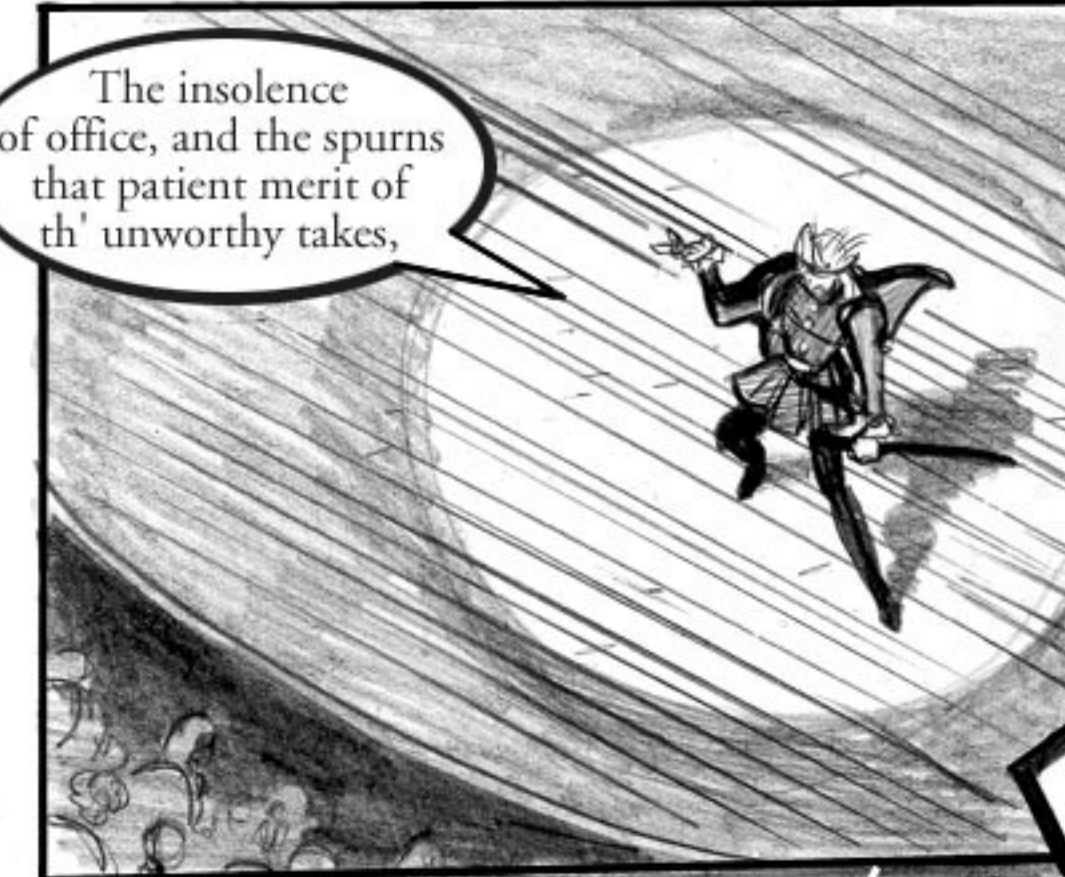


For who would
bear the whips
and scorns of time,


Th' oppressor's
wrong, the proud
man's contumely,

The pangs of
despised love,
the law's delay...






The insolence
of office, and the spurns
that patient merit of
th' unworthy takes,




When he himself
might his quietus make
with a bare bodkin?



Who would fardels
bear, to grunt and sweat
under a weary life,

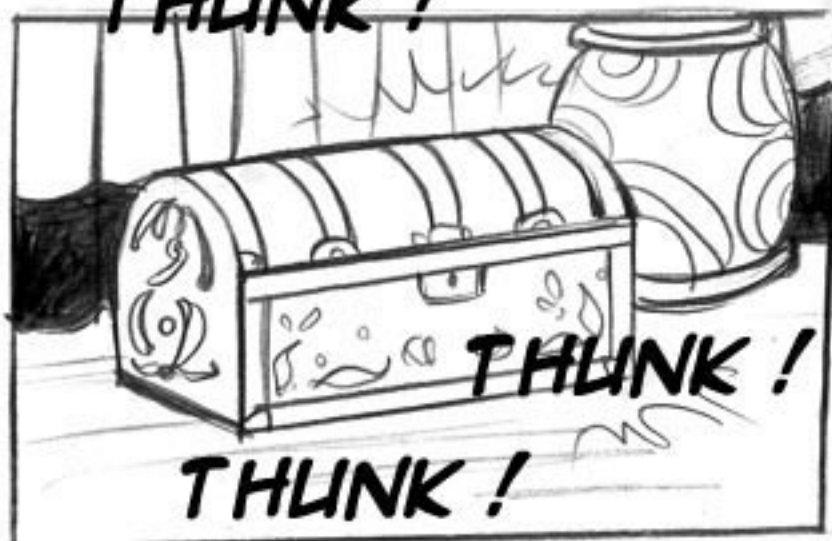
But that the dread
of something after death,




The undiscovered
country from whose
bourn no traveler
returns, puzzles the
will...




THUNK!








I'd bet my black lace garter that mazoku scum had something to do with it...



Look! You are supposed to be doing what I tell you to!




HA! Besides Lord Gaav, MY MUSE is the only one I'll serve!



And right now, my muse is telling me I should kick your ass and take over this little production of yours!



Ha! You'll get my director's megaphone only when you pry my cold, dead, stony fingers off of it!!



Hm. Methinks this situation is in need of some mediation. I'll talk to these boys and try to get them to resolve their differences...



GRRRRRRR



?!!



DAAAH !!

Gentlemen, I beseech you to stop this pointless arguing...

Don't you realize that it is only through REASON, and not through violent confrontation that you can hope to---



Uh, I-I agree, Phil...

I'm certainly inclined to be reasonable at a time like this. I'm also inclined to turn invisible, if such a thing is possible...



Well, well... Using me as a human shield, eh? That doesn't sound like behavior much in keeping with that of a heroic figure like Hamlet...

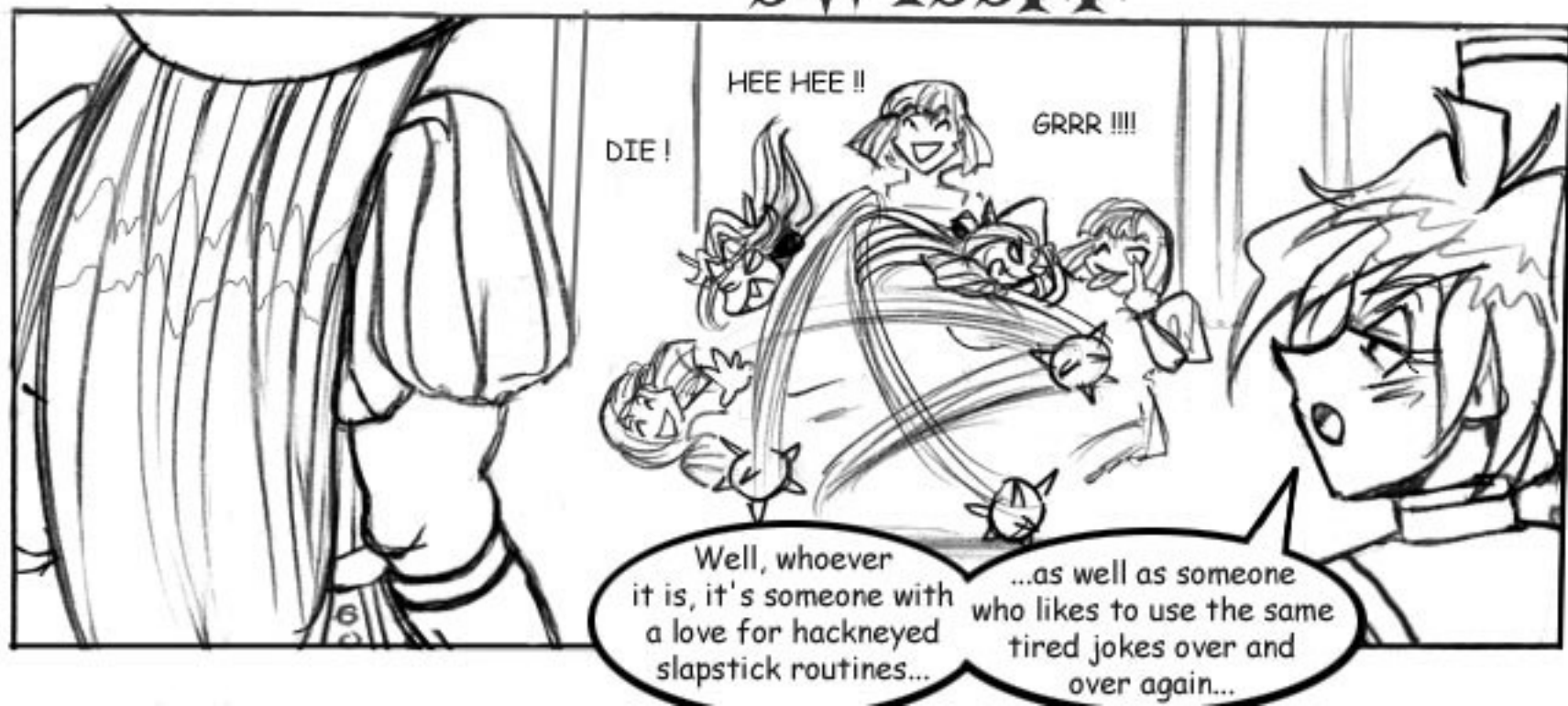
I am NOT using you as a shield, Valgarv! (I have a much BETTER idea...)



PUT ME DOWN, YOU STONE-FACED FREAK !!!

Oh THAT'S IT!
I am SO grinding you into a fine powder after this...





Meanwhile...



I'm sorry about what happened, Mr. Zelgadis. It was all just a terrible misunderstanding which made me lose control over my emotions...

It was a very unjust thing for me to do...



Quite. Well then.... I take it you're not going to try and Pacifist Crush me out of existence again...



Certainly not! And I hereby declare from this moment on, that this production will be free of senseless violence!

DIE NAMAGOMI !!!

ZZZIP!



Huh?



Hm. It would seem that I would up having to use you as a shield after all...

I sure hope that doesn't upset you too much, Valgarv...

I like mittens...

AUUGGHH !!!

My poor baby !!
Filia-
mama's
SORRY !!!

WAAAHHHH

Xelloss... You planned this to happen. You deliberately acted to bring about this series of events, didn't you ?...
DIDN'T YOU ?

Thanks.
I

Don't mention it,
.....luv.....



SOCK!!!



Alright
everyone! Let's
clear the
stage!!!



Let's get
everything we need
for the next scene
moved out here,
pronto!



And so, it would appear
that we have our play
back on track once again...



**But what
NEW trials and
tribulations will
await our intrepid
cast in the
scenes to come?**

**Will Zeldas
ultimately prove
successful in
realizing his
creative vision?**

**And what of
the REST of our
band of
merry
performers?**

**What
sort of
problems
will
THEY
have to--**



HEY!
Narrator Guy!
How about picking
up the pace a little?
Some of us haven't
got all year to be
IN this play,
y'know!!



Uhm... er...
Ahem....
And so, preparations
are quickly made
for the next scene...



Which will
feature one of the
most pivotal
moments in
the play...



The "play-within-
a-play" scene in
which Hamlet
discovers the
true nature of...



...of...uhm...
the true....uhhh...
POP!



Ahhhhhhhhh...



Huh?



Oh...
Hi thereeee....
Nice to see
you all....

This is Naga
the White Serpent...
Still here... Still
watching and
reporting on this
whole....play
thingie....





I'll update
you on the
progress of
the play so far,
but first, I'd
like to thank a
few groups
who made it
here tonight...



Among them,
the Atlas City
Bass Rackets
...uhm... Ass
Brackets....
Brass Rackets
Society...



And the
Femin--Fem...
Feminism---
Hic
Fascist
Feminists....



Unnhhhh.....



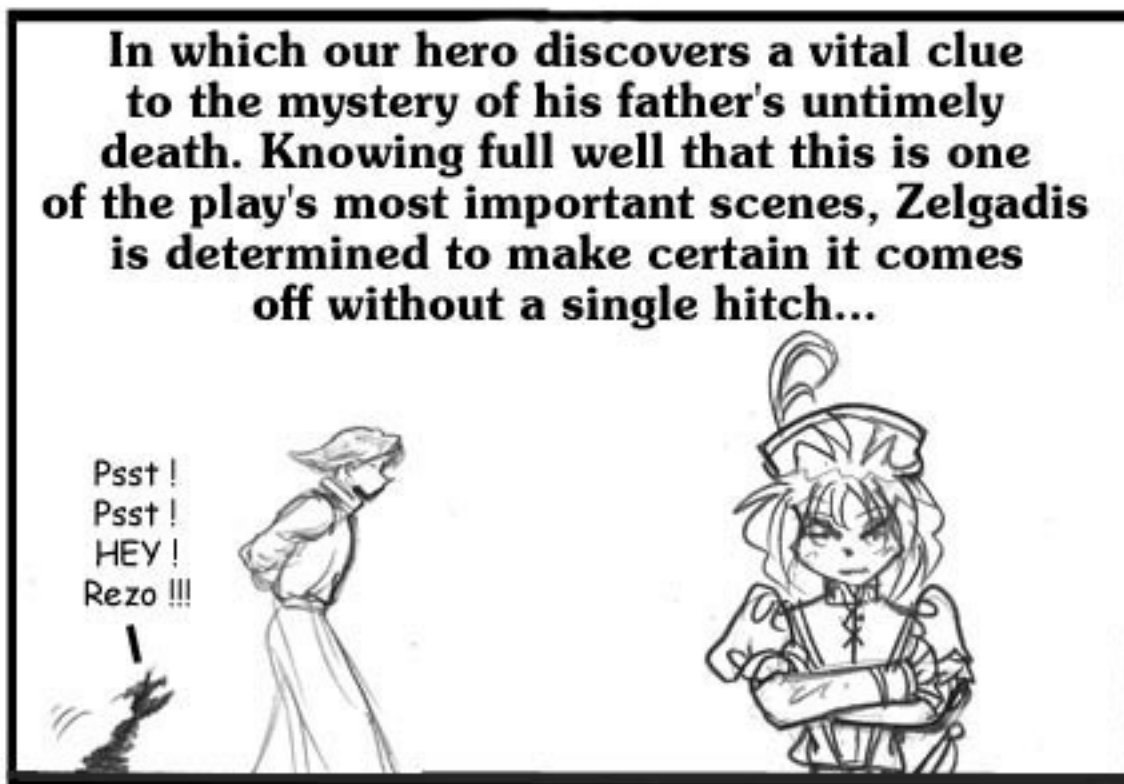
THUD !



Well ?
What are you
waiting for ?
Go on...



Ahem. We will
now continue to
the next scene
in Hamlet...



In which our hero discovers a vital clue
to the mystery of his father's untimely
death. Knowing full well that this is one
of the play's most important scenes, Zelgadis
is determined to make certain it comes
off without a single hitch...

Psst !
Psst !
HEY !
Rezo !!!

As the stage is quickly and quietly prepared for the next scene, the players find themselves filled with a sense of excitement and anxiety. None more so than--



HEY ! WOULD YOU MIND TAKING IT ELSEWHERE ? THE NARRATOR AND I ARE TRYING TO GET THIS PLAY BACK ON TRACK !!!
SHEESH



Come...
This way...
Away from the
Princess of
Perpetual PMS....

I've got a
business
proposition for
you ...

Hmm ?



**WELL ? WHAT ARE
YOU WAITING FOR ?
KEEP GOING !!**



Ahem... None more so than the chimeric genius who helped bring all of this about... Will his attempt to pull off this tragedy ultimately result in triumph ? Or will it be a tragedy unto itself ?....



**We now take you backstage,
where our story is about to resume...**

...And where preparations for the next scene have nearly been completed...

Okay.
Looks good,
Vrumugen...

Allright ! Curtain
goes up in thirty seconds !
We need all the actors who
are going to be in the next
scene out here, pronto !

Well well,
at long last...

Didn't think
we'd get the chance
to take the stage
again...

But now that we are,
we're finally gonna show
everyone what great acting is
really all about ! Right,
Martina ?

Uh... Martina ?

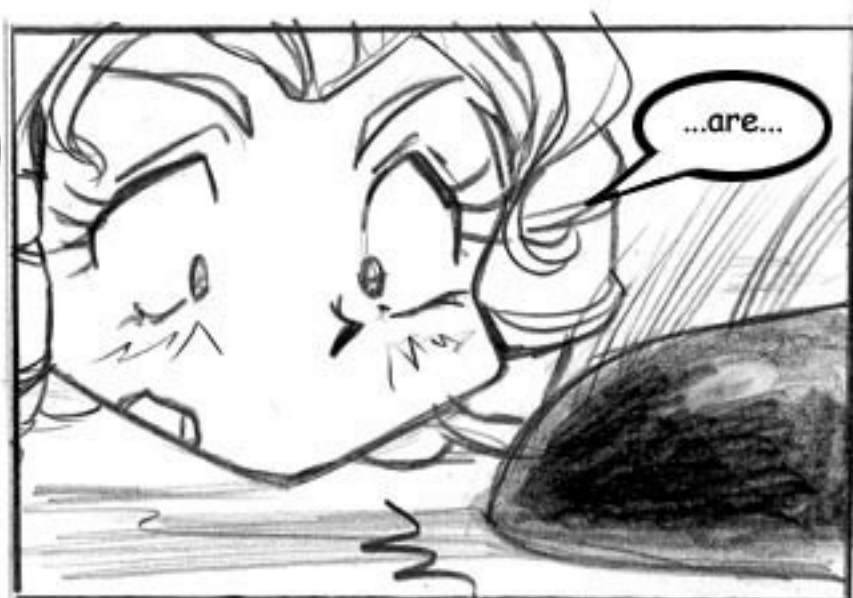
Martina ! WHERE
ARE YOU ?!!

Oh Garrrvieeee...
Where ARE youuu ?
(You horrid little pile
of ash, you...)

I've got a
little something
for you...

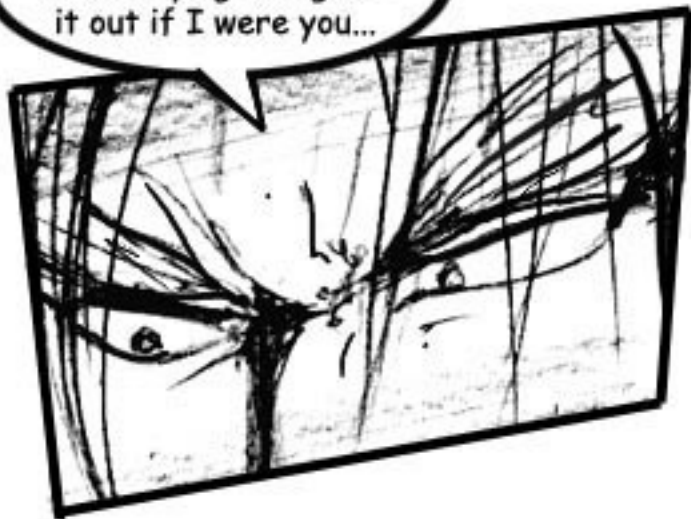
..Just a little
token of my
affection...

Where are you
hiding ? You big,
SCARY monster...



DAUUUGGHHHH !!!! Y-Y-YOU !!!

I wouldn't sprain my brain trying to figure it out if I were you...



Instead, why don't you tell me what's in the bucket? Is that for me?



THIS? Um... n-no.... I-I-It's.. um....it's....



...Water I'm using to mop the floor with...

I thought I'd do a little spring cleaning back here backstage in between scenes...

La la la la.....



See? The floor's all nice and spotless now... Hee hee...



Yeah. Too bad it ain't gonna STAY that way for long...



Hiyeeee.....



Aiyeeeeee



Heh heh.
Still got it.
Ain't gonna
lose it...



So, Garv...
You're back to
normal, eh? (Well,
back to whatever's
normal for YOU,
anyway...)



Hey! What
are you afraid of?
Why don't you come
out here where I
can see you, big
guy?



Hiya, Garv!
So you're back
to normal, I see.
(Normal being a
purely subjective
term here...)



Xelloss...
I'm going to
tear you a new
one. In fact, I'm
going to tear you
SEVERAL new
ones...



....
Uh-oh...



So, you've got your body back already. My, THAT was a quick bit of regeneration...



Well, shortpants, what can I say? I'm a fast healer...

Gee, Garv. Your fast recovery wouldn't have anything to do with your making a deal with Rezo to have him use his "time-reverse" spell to bring your body back to a point BEFORE it got fried, now would it?



How the hell did YOU know about that?

From Rezo. I just bumped into him a couple minutes ago and he told me all about the deal you made to get your body back to normal...




REZO?! You made a DEAL with him? What could a big hairy lummoxx like YOU have that would be of any interest to a man like Rezo?




Hey, Garv! Thanks again for the hair spray! This lot here ought to last me at LEAST a week...

Ah... I see... Of course...




Okay, everyone...
It's time. To your
places...




Filia? We need
you out on stage as our
Narrator... Are you still
going to help us?
Or...

Ahhhh....




Oh...Gee...
I don't know.
I'd hate to leave
Valgarv at a time
like this...




When him so
badly injured and
in need of tender
wuvving care...

Oooh. That's
it. Open wide now.
THAT's a good
wittwe boy...

Gag
Agshuwee, Fiwia-
mama. I feel fibe.
Reawwy. Pease.
Go. Weab me.




Oh.
You'll be
alright on
your own?



Well, alright
then, Snookie.

You stay here and
finish up your strained
carrots and your Filia-mama
will be right back.



Snookie...
Oh gods...The
humiliation...



If Xellos or anyone else ever sees me like this, I just know they would never let me



...live....it...
...down....



SIGH

SNOOKIEEEE...



Did -um's hurt your head? Did Filia-mama kiss it and make it better?



Ladies and gentlemen. Without further ado, we present the next scene in our play...

...In which the dramatic performance which Hamlet had earlier arranged to be played before the court is finally about to take place...

World... Please end now....



Said performance is, of course, if you'll remember, a tool by which Hamlet hopes to determine the guilt or innocence of his Uncle Claudius, who may or may not have caused the murder of Hamlet's father.



How will Claudius react when he sees a re-enactment of his own alleged crime staged before his eyes?

By the time the night's festivities have ended, Hamlet hopes he will have found an answer to that question...



Before the play begins, he pulls his best friend, Horatio aside for a little chat...

Horatio. The play tonight before the King...

One scene of it comes near the circumstance which I have told thee of my father's death.

I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot, observe my uncle...





If his
occulted guilt
do not itself
unkennel in one
speech, it is a
damned ghost that
we have seen...

...And my
imaginations
are as foul
as Vulcan's
stithy.



Give him
heedful note, for I
mine eyes will rivet
to his face...



And after, we will both
our judgments join
in censure of his seeming.



Hamlet takes
his leave of Horatio and
heads towards his seat,
stopping first to pay
respect to his uncle,
the king.



How fares
our cousin
Hamlet?

Excellent, i' faith,
of the chameleon's
dish.

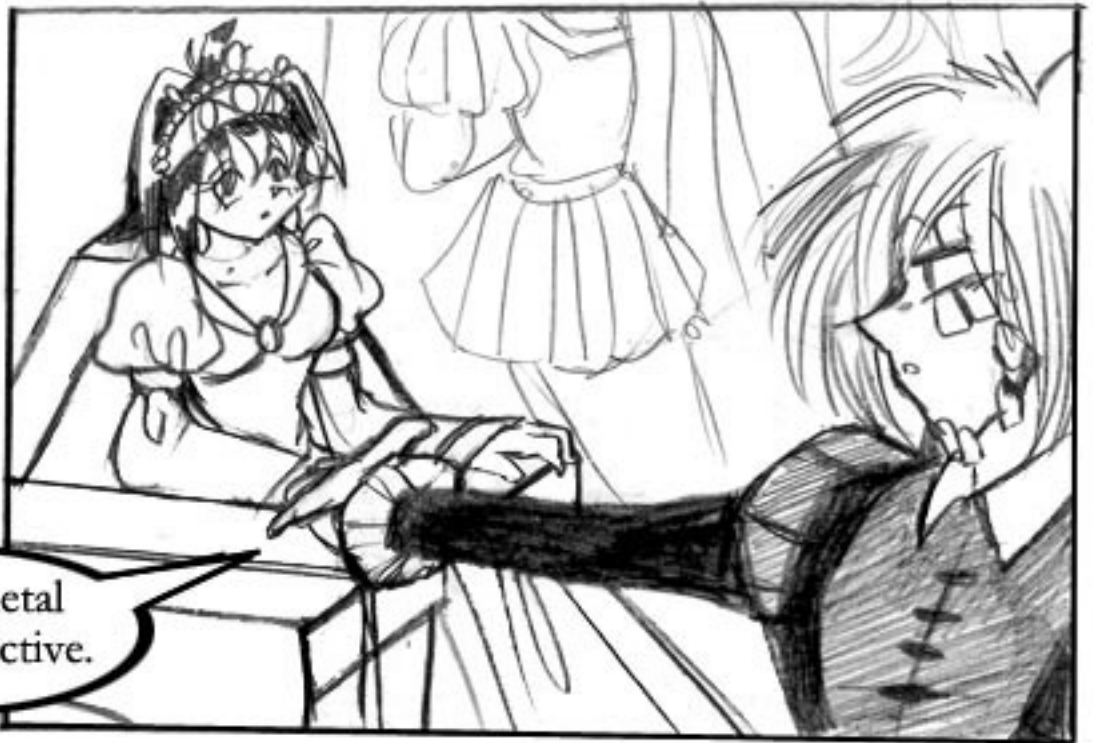
I eat the air,
promised-crammed.
You cannot feed
capons so.



Come hither,
my dear Hamlet,
sit by me.



No, good mother...

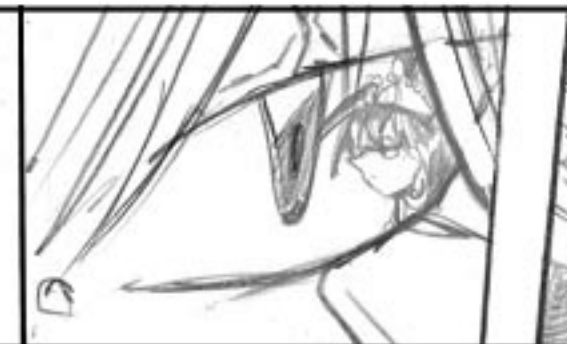


Here's metal more attractive.

Hamlet takes a seat next to Ophelia. It has been days since the two have been in each other's presence. Ophelia can still feel the harsh, angry words of Hamlet's scolding stinging her ears.



Hamlet, for his part, feels sorry for what he has put Ophelia through, but he also knows that she had played an active role in her father Polonius', attempts to spy on him...

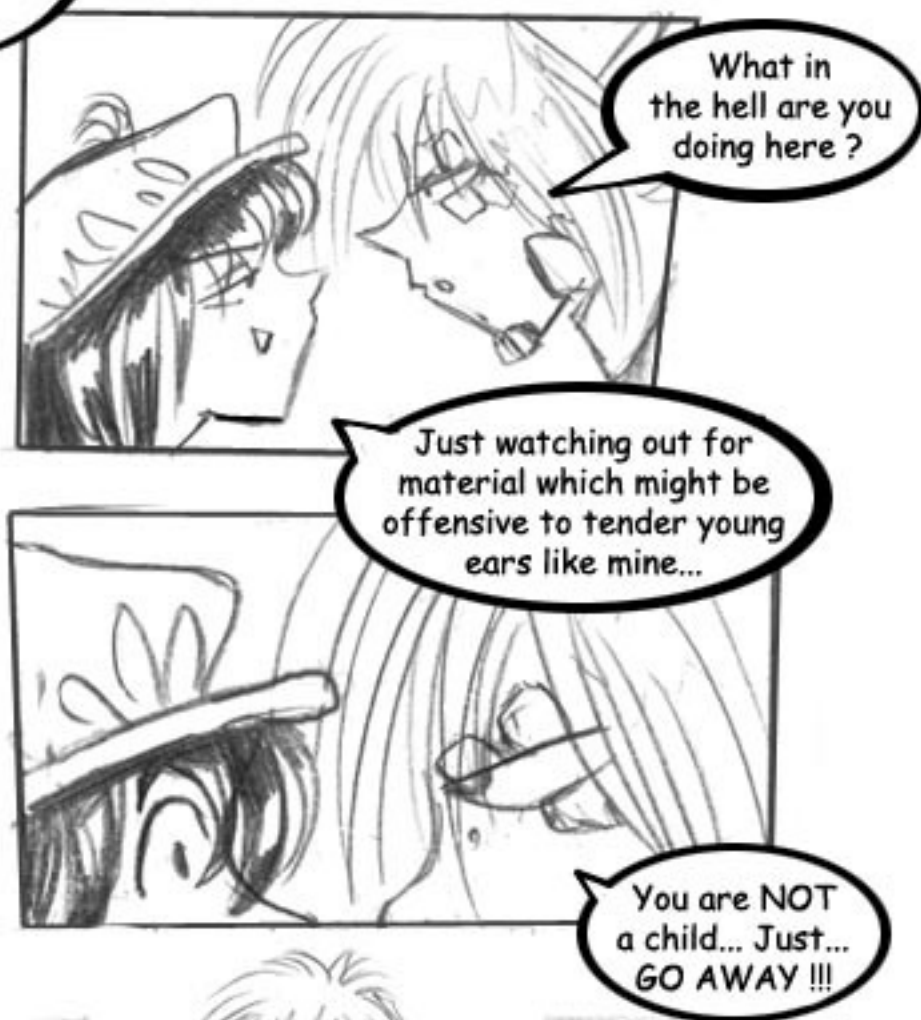


Even if she were only doing her duty, even if she hadn't meant him any harm, she had still tried to deceive him...

It hurt Hamlet to see deception in the heart of someone he so loved...Someone he STILL loved...



It hurt Hamlet even more, knowing that he could not confide his plans to her, not yet. And that he would have to keep on playing the madman, no matter how much it might hurt her...





Eh-huurmm..

You are
merry, my
lord...

Hunh?...
Oh..
Who, I ?



O God,
your only
jig-maker.

What
should a
man do but
be merry ?

Ay, my
lord.



For look
you how
cheerfully
my mother
looks...

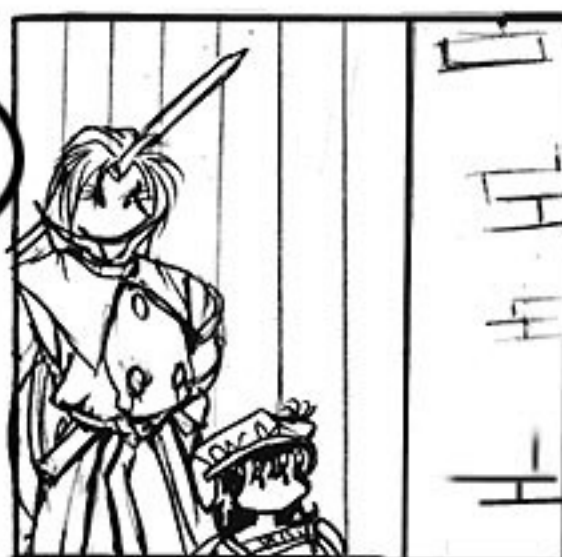
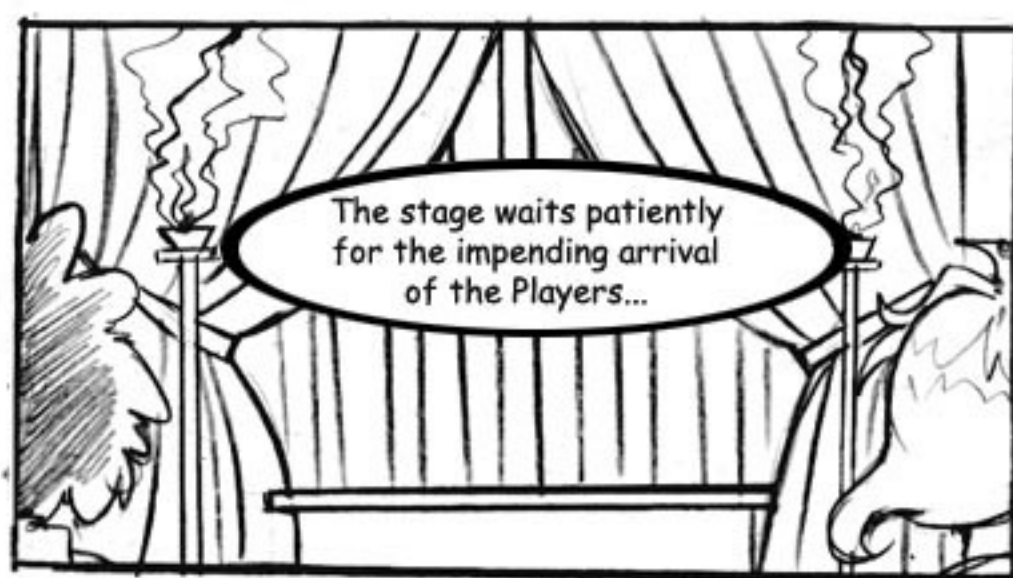
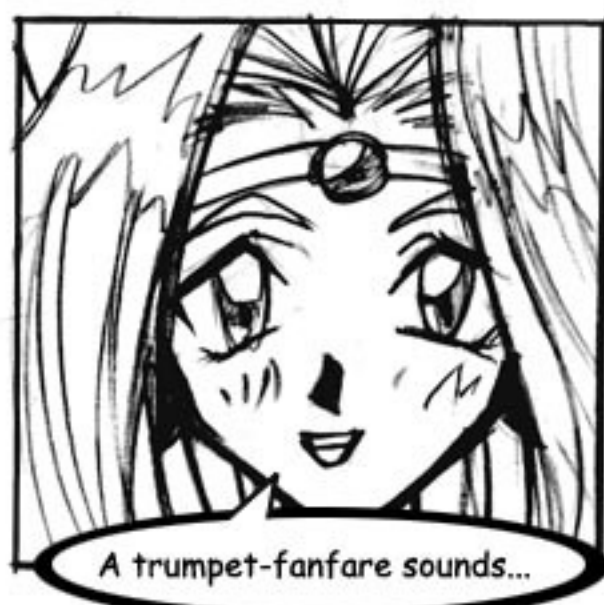
... and
my
father died
within's
two--

AHHH !!!



GULP

ERREMMM



BWAAAATT!!!

FWIT !!



*For us and
for our tragedy,
here stooping to
your clemency...*



*We beg
your hearing
patiently.*

*Is this a
prologue or the
posy of a ring?*



*Tis
brief, my
lord.*

*As woman's
love.*



*Full thirty times
bath Phoebus' cart
gone round.*

*Neptune's salt
wash and Tellus'
orbed ground,*



*Since love our hearts
and hymen did our hands*

*Unite commutual in
most sacred bands.*



*So many journeys may the sun and moon
make us again count o'er ere love be done !
But woe is me ! You are so sick of late,
so far from cheer and from your former state,
that I distrust you. Yet though I distrust,
discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must.*

*For women fear too much,
even as they love,
And women's fear and love hold
quantity, in neither aught,
or in extremity.*

*Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too.
My operant powers their function leave to do.
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
honored, beloved; and haply as one kind...*



*For husband
shalt thou--*

*O confound the rest !
Such love must needs be
treason in my breast!*

*In second husband
let me be accurst.
None wed the second
but who killed
the first...*

That's wormwood !

*The instances that
second marriage move
are base respects of thrift,
but none of love.*

*A second time I kill my
husband dead
When second husband
kisses me in bed.*

My God... I just
realized something...

They're... actually...
remembering their
lines !

Could this mean that
the streak of misfortune
which has long been
plaguing this production is
at last OVER ?

Y'know, director man.
I couldn't help but notice
this play is getting a tad
boring...

I mean, not only am I
IN a crappy play, I'm in a
crappy play where I have to
watch a bunch of other people
performing ANOTHER
crappy play...

FSHHHK !!

Would you just
go back to your
seat, please ?

I promise you,
once the mayhem
and gore start
flowing...

So I was thinking, maybe I
could help liven things up a bit ...

...by perhaps throwing
in a bunch of unscheduled,
audience-pleasing mayhem
and gore ? Hmm ?

...there WILL be
plenty of it !

Yes... Yes,
there WILL be...

SIGH

*So think thou wilt
no second husband wed,
but die thy thoughts when
thy first lord is dead.*

*Both here and hence
pursue me lasting strife!
If, once a widow,
ever I be wife!*

*'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave
me here awhile. My spirits grow dull
and fain I would beguile the
tedious day with sleep.*

SNAP!


STEP STEP STEP STEP

Thanks for
re-hiring us,
boss...

Zzzzzz


TUP!

WHOOOMP!!




Sleep rock
thy brain...

And never come
mischance between
us twain.




Madam, how
like you this
play?




O, but
she'll keep
her word.


The lady
doth protest
too much,
methinks.



Have you heard
the argument? Is there
no offense in 't?

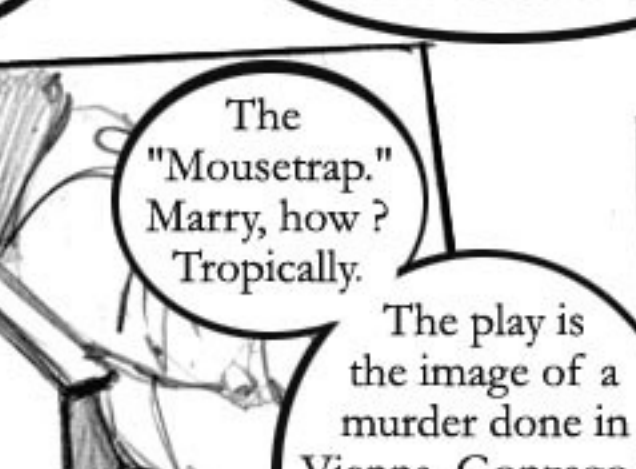


No, no, they
do but jest, poison
in jest. No offense
i' th' world.

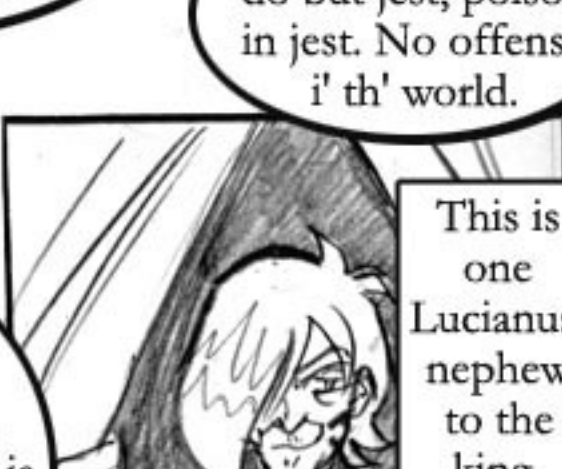


The
"Mousetrap."
Marry, how?
Tropically.


What do you
call the play?




The play is
the image of a
murder done in
Vienna. Gonzago is
the duke's name,
his wife
Baptista.



This is
one
Lucianus,
nephew
to the
king.



'Tis a knavish
piece of work, but
what of that?



Your Majesty and
we that have free souls,
it touches us not.



Begin,
murderer. Pox,
leave thy damn-
able faces and
begin!



Come, the
croaking raven
doth bellow
for revenge.

*Thoughts black,
hands apt,
drugs fit,
and time
agreeing.*



*Confederate season,
else no creature
seeing.*

*Thou mixture rank,
of midnight weeds
collected,*

*With Hecate's
ban thrice
blasted,
thrice infected.*

*Thy natural
magic and dire
property
On wholesome life
usurp immediately.*



?!



GACK!



THUD!



He poisons him i' th'
garden for his estate...





His name's Gonzago. The story is extant and written in very choice Italian.

You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.



Lights !

King Claudius makes a hasty exit, followed by his concerned wife and the rest of his court, save Hamlet and Horatio.



It would appear as if the question of whether or not the ghost of Hamlet's father had been telling the truth about his murder, has at last been answered...

*Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play.*



*For some must watch,
while some must sleep:
Thus runs the world away.*





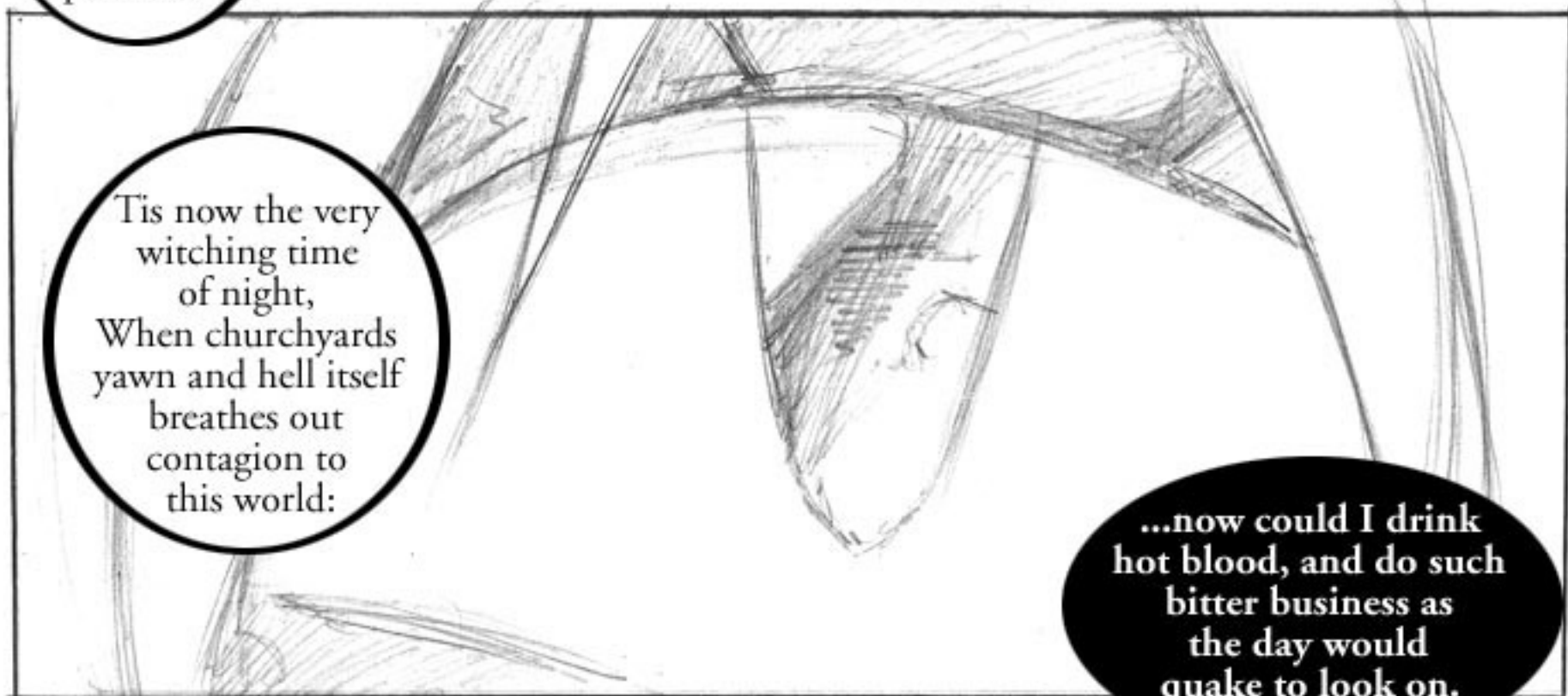
Very well,
my lord.

O good
Horatio,
I'll take the
ghost's word
for a thousand
pound. Didst
perceive?



Upon the talk
of the poisoning?

I did very
well note
him.



Tis now the very
witching time
of night,
When churchyards
yawn and hell itself
breathes out
contagion to
this world:

...now could I drink
hot blood, and do such
bitter business as
the day would
quake to look on.



And so, Hamlet,
now certain of
his uncle's
guilt,
sets himself
upon the
path of
bringing his
uncle to
justice.

A path, no doubt
fraught with danger, as
well Hamlet knows...



Grrrk....
Hellp....

PULL!!

* GRUNT *

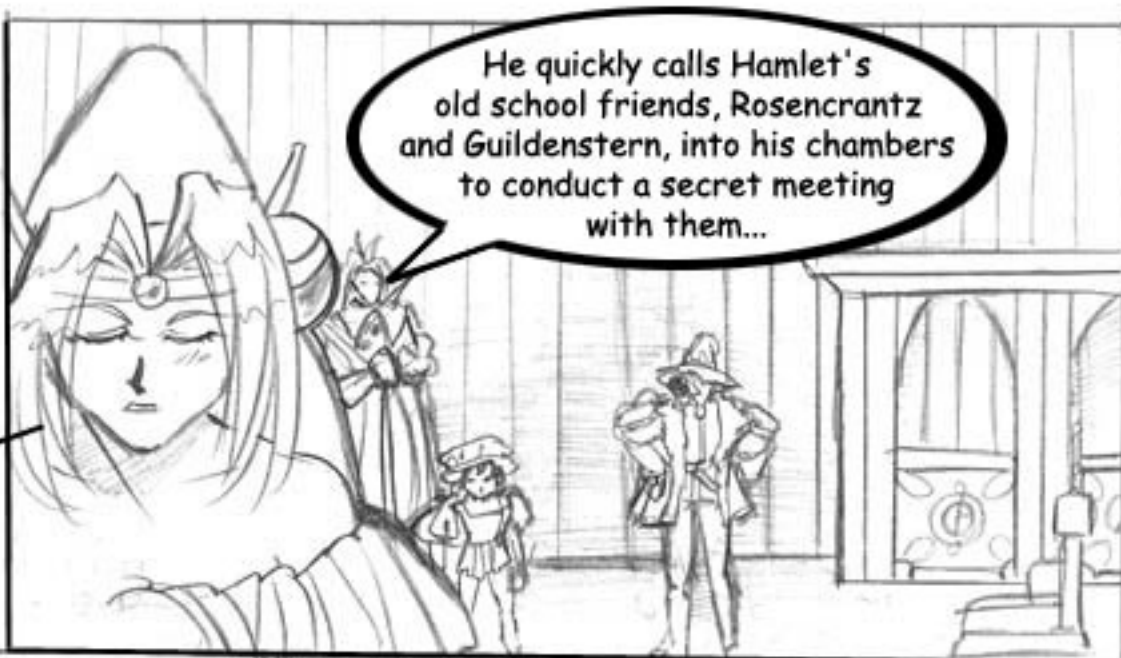
Okay. Maybe
I AM getting too
old for this...

**ONE
UNCHARACTERISTICALLY
UNEVENTFUL
SCENE CHANGE
LATER...**

And so, Hamlet now has what he believes to be irrefutable proof of his Uncle Claudius' guilt... All that remains now is for him to act...

However, it does not appear as if Claudius is going to sit idly by and wait for him to do so...

I like him not... Nor stands it safe with us to let his madness range...



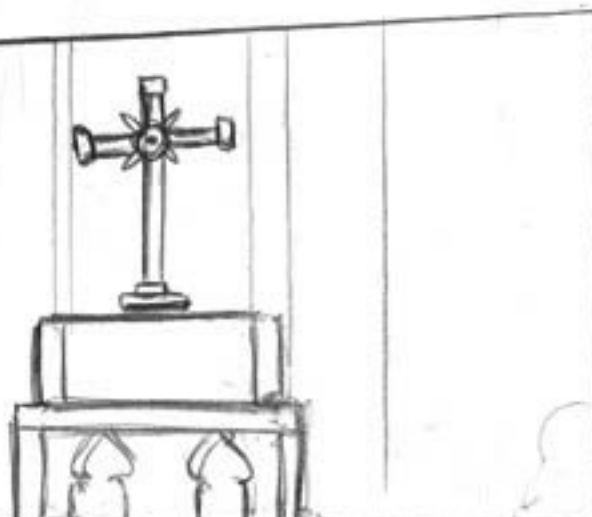
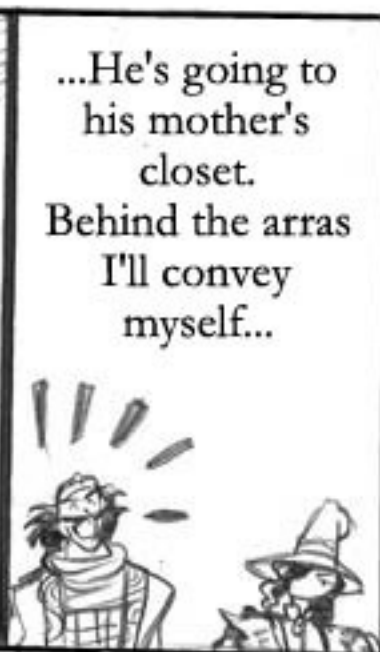
Therefore, prepare you. I your commission will forthwith dispatch,

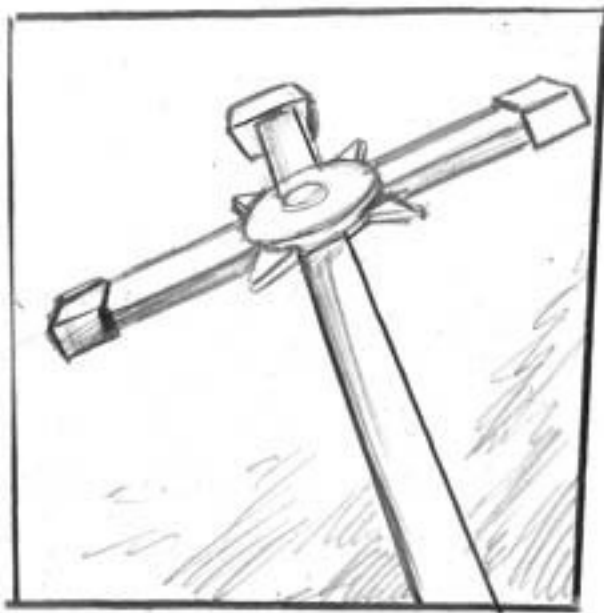
And he to England shall along with you. The terms of our estate may not endure hazard so near's as doth hourly grow out of his brows.



Most holy and religious fear it is to keep those many bodies safe that live and feed upon your Maj--







O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
though inclination be as sharp as will.
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent.



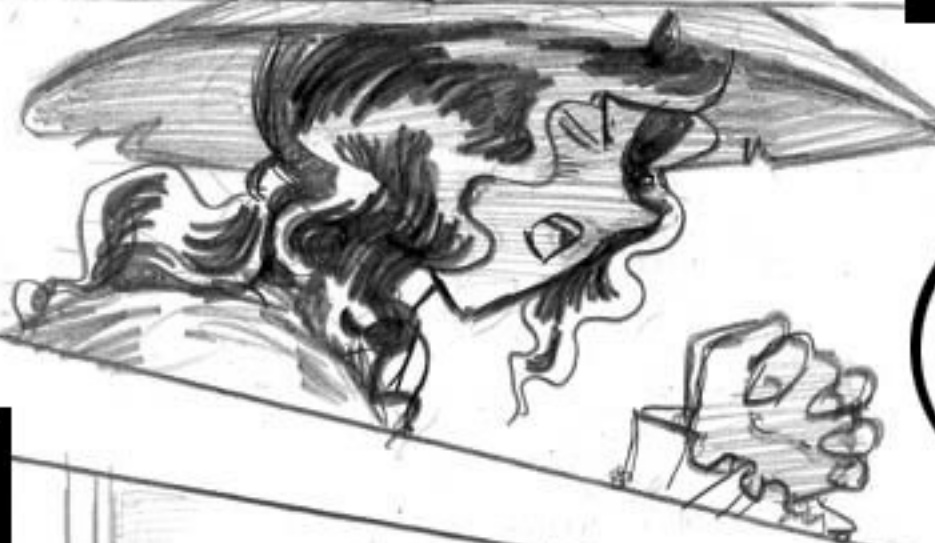
What if this cursed hand
were thicker than itself with brother's blood?
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
to wash it white as snow?

But O, what form of prayer
can serve my turn?
"Forgive me my foul murder?"



That cannot be,
since I am still
possessed of those
effects for which
I did the murder:
My crown, mine own
ambition, and
my queen.

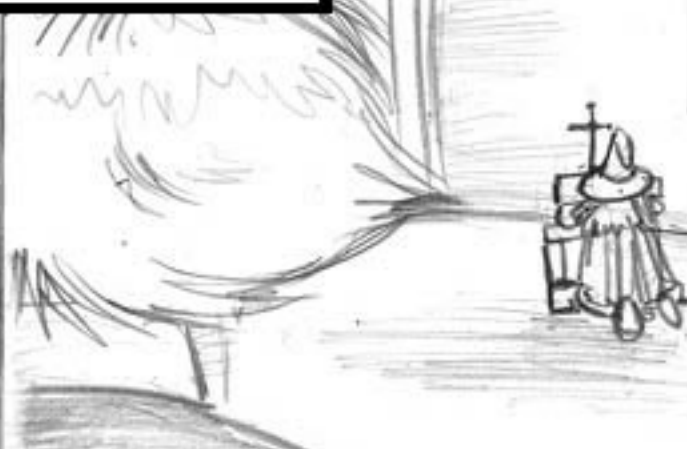
Help, angels!
Make assay.




At that moment, Hamlet
walks by and notices the
king alone, apparently
deep in concentration.

Bow, stubborn
knees and heart with
strings of steel
be soft as sinews
of the newborn babe.
All may be well.

Now might I do it pat,
now he is a-praying...





And now...

I'll do 't...

KSSAHK!



He took my father grossly,
full of bread, with all his
crimes broad blown, as
flush as May.

And am I then
revenged to take him
in the purging of his soul,
when he is fit and
seasoned for his
passage ?

And so he
goes to heaven,
and so am I
revenged. That
would be
scanned.



No.



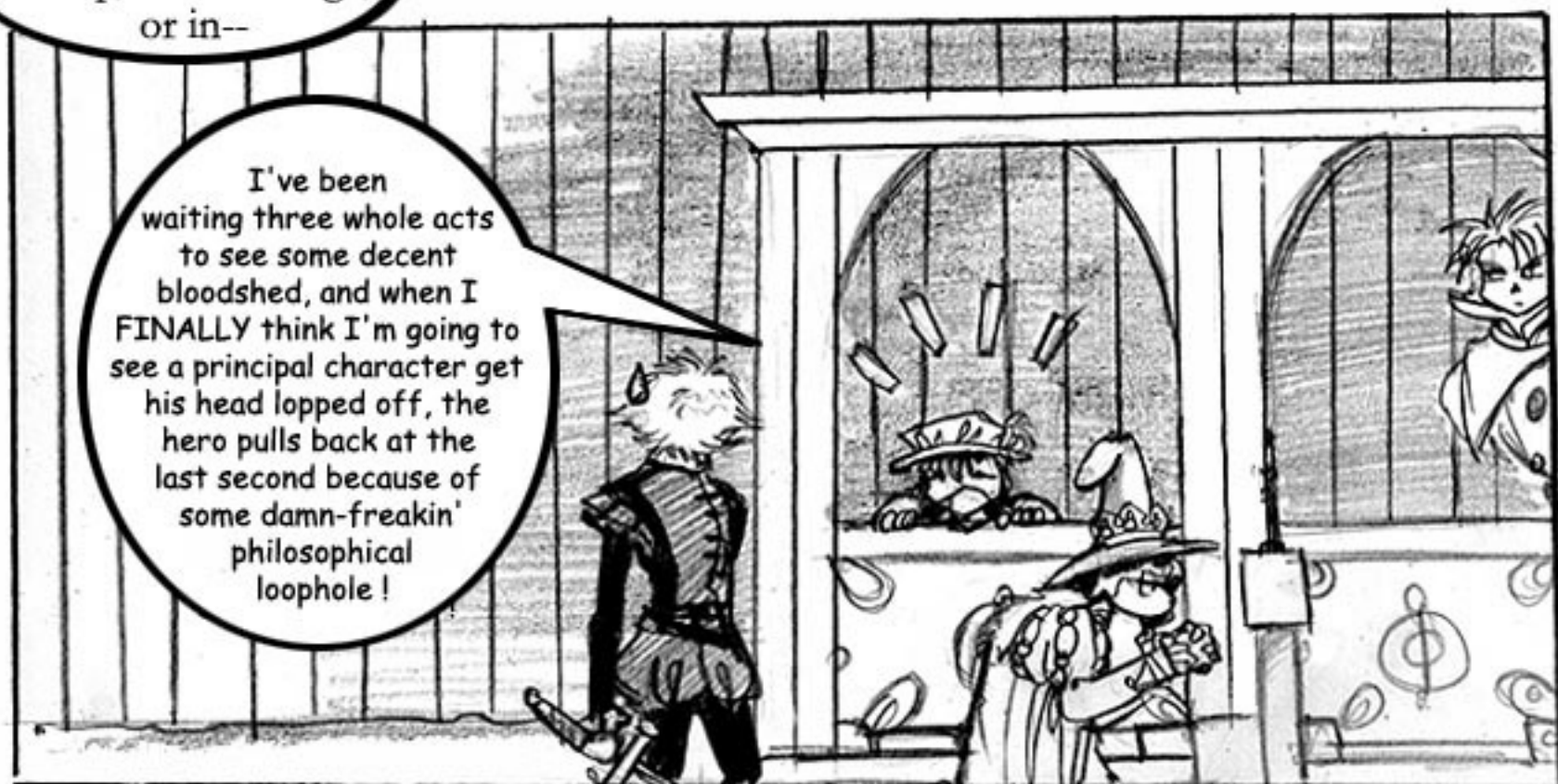
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage, or in--



Oh COME ON, now!



Just hurry up and kill him already! What's the hold up?



I've been waiting three whole acts to see some decent bloodshed, and when I FINALLY think I'm going to see a principal character get his head lopped off, the hero pulls back at the last second because of some damn-freakin' philosophical loophole!



I mean, this "Hamlet" guy, it's like, he's a total puss!

It's like he can't make up his damn mind about anything! He couldn't even bring himself to believe what his own father had said about Claudius even though it was TOTALLY obvious the guy was a scumball!

Why can't Hamlet just KILL the guy and take over the kingdom? Why does he always have to DEBATE everything? Geez!



Sigh...

Polonius hopes that Hamlet still has enough trust in his mother to confide in her...

Little does he know of the tragic and bloody events which are about to take place..

Whoa. That WAS a smooth segaway...

EXCUSE ME, gentlemen....

SKOOCH

SKOOCH

SKOOCH

SKOOCH

"Tragic and bloody events", eh? So after 3 acts and 226-1/2 manga pages, things FINALLY start getting good.

He will come straight. Look you lay home to him.

Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with...

Ahem. So Polonius speaks with the Queen, to advise her on what to say once Hamlet arrives...



And that your Grace hath screened and stood between much heat and him.



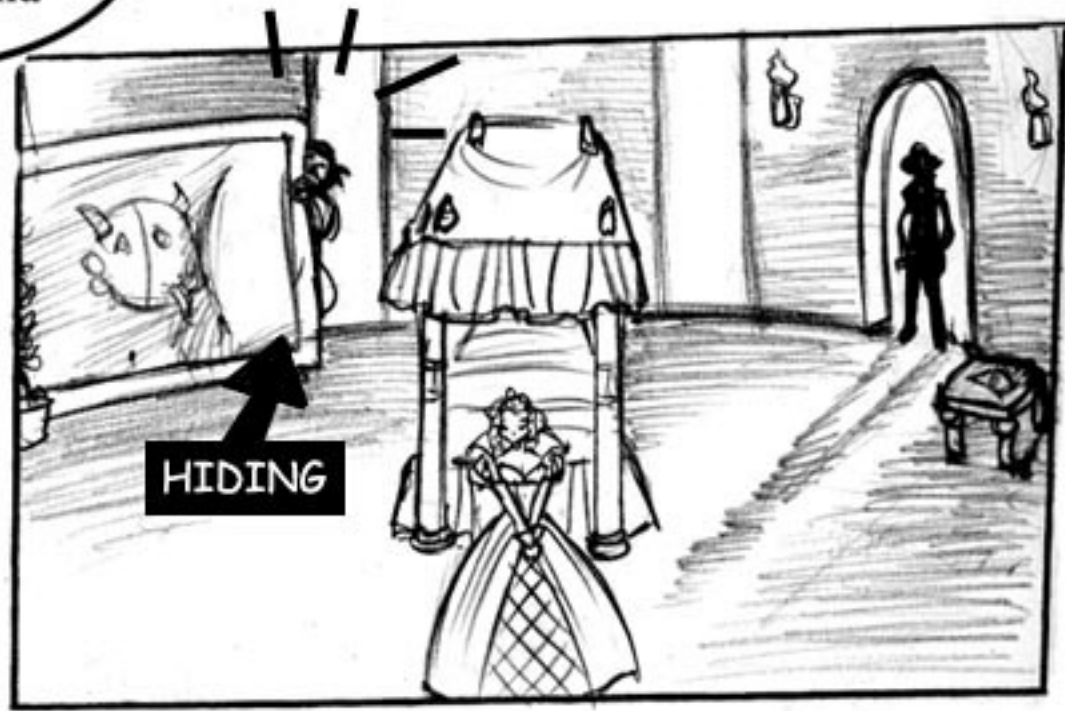
I'll silence me even here.

Pray you, be round with him.



I'll warrant you. Fear me not.

Withdraw, I hear him coming...



HIDING



Now, mother, what's the matter?



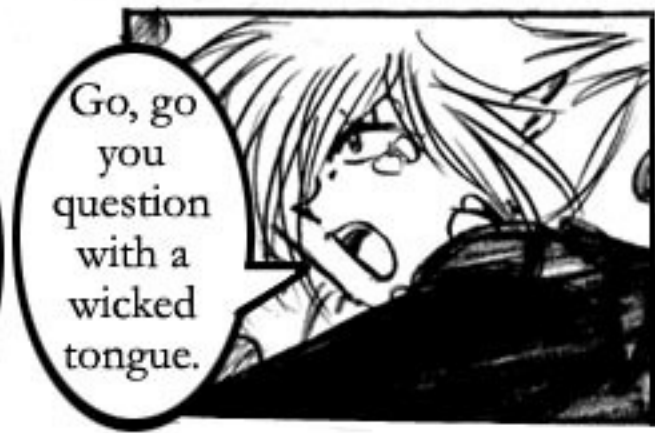
Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.



Mother, you have my father much offended.

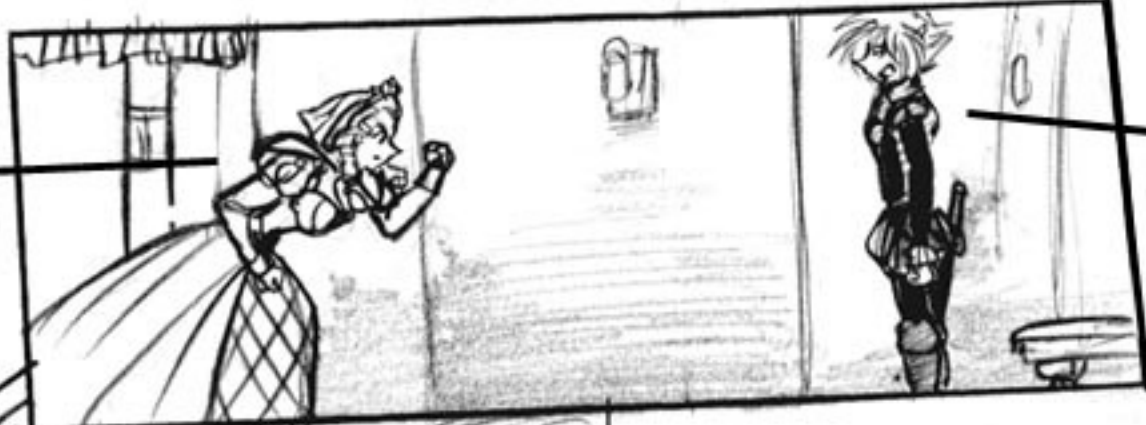


Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.



Go, go you question with a wicked tongue.

Why,
how now,
Hamlet?



What's the
matter
now?

Have you
forgot
me?

No,
by the rood,
not so.

You are
the Queen,
your
husband's
brother's
wife...

...And (would
it were not so)
you are my
mother.



Nay, then
I'll set those to you
that can speak.



Come, come,
and sit you down;
you shall not budge!



FWLUMP!

You go not till
I set you up a glass..

Where you may see
the inmost part of you.



What wilt thou do?
Thou wilt not murder me?

HELP !!

Polonius, seeing the Queen is in trouble, cries out for help...

What ho!
Help!

...It will prove a fatal error in judgement, for Hamlet mistakes him for King Claudius and--

How now, a rat?

Dead, for a ducat!

THOK!

DEAD !!

Uhhh...



But on the upside, Prince Phil IS out of the play from now on...

act
three





Act

Two



Second Intermission